

# SEVENTEEN SERMONS

Preach'd upon  
Several Occasions.

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By *WILLIAM CLAGETT*, D. D.  
Late PREACHER to the Honourable  
Society of *Grays-Inn*, and one of his  
Majesty's Chaplains in Ordinary.

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With the SUMM of a CONFERENCE,  
On *February 21, 1686.* between *Dr. Clagett*  
and *Father Gooden*, about the Point of  
Transubstantiation.

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The Second Edition.

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V O L. I.

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*Fleet-street.* 1694.



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SERMONS

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Several Occasions

By WILLIAM CARGILL, D.D.  
Late RECTOR to the Honourable  
Society of Gray's-Inn, and one of the  
Majesty's Chaplains in Ordinary.

With the SUMM of a CONFERENCE  
On Friday 21. 1686 between Dr. Cargill  
and the Doctors of the Point of  
Theological

The Second Edition.

London: Printed by J. Sturges, at the  
Sign of the Anchor, in St. Dunstons Church  
Lane. 1687.

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T H E  
P R E F A C E.

**T**Here will need no more to recommend the following Discourses to the Reader, than only to assure him he is not imposed upon by the Title Page; but what is here presented to him as Dr. Clager's Sermons, are really so, being published from his own papers, and by his own Brother.

And indeed the Sermons themselves do sufficiently speak their Author, for they every where express the Spirit, the Judgment, and the reasoning of that Excellent Man; tho some of them, perhaps want that Finishing which his Masterly Hand would have given them, had he been to have published them himself.

The first of these Sermons he meant to have Printed, if God had given him Life, being prevailed upon by the Importunity of several of his Friends, who then judged it very seasonable.

## The Preface.

*The last in this Collection was the last Sermon he Preached. It was preached at St. Martins in the Fields, on the day of his Lent-course there. And that very Evening he fell into that Sickneß which put a period to his Life twelve days after.*

*No Man perhaps in this Age of so private a Condition died more lamented. For as he had all the amiable charming Qualities to procure the Esteem and Love of every one that knew him: So God had bestowed upon him so many great and useful Talents, for the doing Service to Religion, to the Church, to all about him; And he so faithfully and industriously employed those Talents, to those purposes, that he was really a publick Blessing and he had that Right done him, as to be esteemed so.*

*He was born at St. Edmunds-bury, Sept. 24. 1646. being the Son of Mr. Nicholas Claget, then Minister there.*

*His University Education was at Emanuel Colledge in Cambridge.*

*His first publick appearance in the World was at his own Native Town of Bury, where he was chosen one of the Preachers. Which Office he discharged for several years with so universal a Reputation, that it might be truly said as to him, That a*  
Pro-

## The Preface.

Prophet had Honour in his own Country.

*From thence, at the Instance of some considerable Men of the Long Robe (whose Business at the Assizes there, gave them Opportunities of being acquainted with his great Worth and Abilities) he was prevailed with to remove to Grays-Inn. And indeed it was no small Testimony given to his Merits, that he was thought worthy by that Honourable Society to succeed the Eminent Dr. Cradock, as their Preacher.*

*In this place he continued all the remainder of his Life, and he behaved himself worthily in it; and the Gentlemen of that House took all Occasions of declaring that he did so, by the constant Kindness they expressed to him while he lived, and the Respects they paid him at his Death.*

*He had indeed at the time of his Death two other Preferments besides that of Grays-Inn. The Lord keeper North (his Wives Kinsman) had given him a Living in Buckingham-shire; but the other Place was that which he himself most valued next to Grays-Inn, and that was the Lecture of Bassishaw, to which he was chosen by that Parish about two years before his death. It was the Lecture which*

## The Preface.

*Dr. Calamy had immediatly held before him. Never was their two greater Men successively Lecturers of one Parish; nor ever was any Parish kinder to two Lecturers.*

*Dr. Claget dyed of the Small-Pox, March 28th. and was buried in the Church of St. Michael Bassishaw. Anno 1688*

*His Wife, Mrs. Thomasin North, a most Vertuous and Accomplished Woman; dyed eighteen days after him of the same Disease, and was buried in the same Grave with him.*

*There is this little Passage, not unfit to be mentioned here. The last Sermon Dr. Claget made, (tho not the last he preached) was that which is the Sixteenth in this Collection, upon this Text, Shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil? This Sermon he made upon occasion of the death of a Child of his that happened a little before. And he had writ it fairly out, I suppose for this end, that his Wife might read it. And accordingly she did so, but upon a much sadder Occasion: For it was after his death that she got this Sermon into her hands; and then she made it her continual Entertainment (and a seasonable one it was) as long as her strength would suffer her.*

But

## The Preface.

*But to return to Dr. Claget. We owe it to the Society of Grays-Inn, that he was brought to this City: But after he came hither, his own Merits in a little time rendred him sufficiently conspicuous.*

*For so innocent and unblameable was his Life, such an unaffected Honesty and Simplicity appeared in all his Conversation; so obliging he was in his Temper, so sincere in all his Friendships, so ready to do all sorts of good Offices that came in his way; and withal so prudent a Man, so good a Preacher, so dexterous in untying Knots, and making hard things plain, so happy in treating of common Subjects in an uncommon and yet useful way. So able a Champion for the True Religion against all Opposers whatsoever; and lastly, so ready upon all occasions to Advise, to Direct, to Encourage any work that was undertaken for the promoting or defending the Cause of God. I say, all these Qualities were so eminent in Dr. Claget, that it was impossible they should be hid. The Town soon took Notice of him, and none that intimately knew him, could forbear to love and admire him; and scarce any that had heard of him, to esteem and honour him.*

*If the Reader would know more of Doctor Claget, let him peruse those Wri-*

## The Preface.

tings of his, which he published himself. By them he will in some measure be able to make a Judgment of the Genius and Abilities of the Man.

If a Friend can speak without partiality, there doth in those Writings appear so strong a Judgment, such an admirable Faculty of Reasoning, so much Honesty and Candor of Temper, so great plainness and perspicuity, and withal so much spirit and quickness, and, in a word, all the Qualities that can recommend an Author, or render his Books Excellent in their kind; That I should not scruple to give Dr. Claget a place among the most Eminent and Celebrated Writers of this Church. And if he may be allowed that, it is as great an Honour as can be done him. For perhaps from the inspired Age to this, the World did never see more Accurate, and more Judicious Composures in matters of Religion, than the Church of England has produced in our days.

Born Sep<sup>r</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> 1646  
dy'd March 28 1688

aged about 41  $\frac{1}{2}$  The

Notes these 10 may were published  
& fol. following w<sup>th</sup> end of 4

But How came it An<sup>o</sup> 1688 & 2<sup>nd</sup> ed<sup>n</sup>  
to be published 1688 before his death!  
viz pag VIII ~ ~ ~

## The Preface.

*The Discourses writ and published by  
Dr. Claget, are these that follow.*

A Discourse concerning the Operations of the Holy Spirit; in Answer to Dr. O. 1677. *Octavo.*

A Second Part. 1680.

A Reply to a Pamphlet, called, *The Mischief of Impositions*: Writ by Mr A. against the Dean of St. Pauls. 1681. *Quarto.*

An Answer to the Dissenters Objections against the Common-Prayers. 1683. *Quarto.*

The Difference of the Case between the Separation of Protestants from the Church of *Rome*, and the Separation of Dissenters from the Church of *England*. 1683. *Quarto.*

A Discourse concerning the Invocation of the B. Virgin, and the Saints. 1686. *Quarto.*

A Paraphrase with Notes on the Sixth Chapter of St. *John*, against Transubstantiation. 1686. *Quarto.*

A Discourse concerning the pretended Sacrament of Extream Unction. With a Letter to the Vindicator of the Bishop of *Condom*. 1687. *Quarto.*

A Second Letter to the Vindicator of the Bishop of *Condom*. 1687. *Quarto.*

A



## The Preface.

A View of the whole Controversie between the Representer and the Answerer ; in which are laid open some of the Methods by which Protestants are Misrepresented by Papists. 1687. *Quarto*.

An answer to the Representer's Reflections upon the state and view of the Controversie, &c. Shewing that the Vindicator has utterly ruined the new Design of Expounding and Representing Popery. 1688. *Quarto*.

Queries concerning the *English* Reformation answered. 1688. *Quarto*.

The School of the *Eucharist*, a Translation ; the Preface writ by Dr. Claget.

Of the Humanity and Charity of Christians. A Sermon preached at the *Suffolk* Feast, in St. Michael Cornhil, London, Nov. 30. 1686.

Card. *Bellarmino's* Seventh Note of the Union of the Members among themselves and with the Head.

His Twelfth Note of the Light of Prophecie, Examined and Confuted. Both by Dr. Claget.

J. S.

Published since Dr. Clagets Death, Two Volumes of Sermons, with his Paraphrase on the 1st. 2d. 3d. 4th. 5th. 7th. and 8th. Chapters of St. John, in *Octavo*.

The

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**A**ND to the Angel of the church in Pergamos, write, these things saith he, which hath the sharp sword with two edges:

*I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is; and thou holdest fast my Name, and hast not denied my faith even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain amongst you, where Satan dwelleth.*

*But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the Children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to Idols, and to commit fornication.*

*So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.*

*Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*

SERM.

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SERM.

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The Sum of a Conference on Feb. 21<sup>st</sup>.  
1686. between Dr. *Claget* and Father  
*Gooden*, about the Point of Transub-  
stantiation.

## Imprimatur.

February 9<sup>th</sup>  
1688.

*Hen. Manrice, Rmo In  
Christo P. D. Wil.  
Archlepis. Cant. &  
Sacris.*

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## The First Sermon.

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REVEL. II. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

*And to the Angel of the Church in Pergamos, write these things saith he, which hath the sharp sword with two edges :*

*I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satans seat is; and thou holdest fast my Name, and hast not denied my Faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful Martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.*

*But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the Doctrine of Baalam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the Children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to Idols, and to commit fornication.*

*So hast thou also them that hold the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.*

*Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*

**T**HAT the Seven Churches of the Proconsular *Asia*, to which our Lord sent these several Messages by St. John, were then in being, when he saw this Vision and heard these words, is a matter, I think, be-

B

yond



yond question ; and therefore there is little reason to question whether in these Messa- ges the then present state of those Churches were described : And whether the design of our Lord was likewise to describe the state of the Church, from the Days of the Apostles to the end of the World, in several intervals thereof, as some Men think, I dare not take upon me to deny. Sure I am, that in these Epistles to the Seven Churches, there are Instructions no less useful for all Ages of the Church, than if they were as truly Prophe- tical as they are Historical ; and that they were designed not only for the Information of the then present Churches of the Procon- sular *Asia*, but for the Edification of all Churches in all places, and in all Ages of the World, is evident from that so often repeated close ; *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.* Every Church therefore, because it can hear, ought to hear ; and every Man of every Church, because every Man hath an Ear to hear ; and because this Exhortation is also ad- ded, to the Epistle sent to the Church of *Per- gamos*, part of which I have now read to you, I may also exhort you to hear, or rather I need not, since our Lord Jesus himself hath required you so to do.

St. *John*, who had been the Founder of the Church of *Pergamos*, was now in the Isle of *Patmos* Banished thither for the Te- stimony

testimony of Jesus, as he witnesseth himself.  
chap. i. ver. 9. *I John, who also am your Brother and companion in Tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the Isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.* But he had committed this Church to the care of a Bishop in his absence, who is here called *the Angel of the Church*, and to whom this Epistle was directed in behalf of the Church under his care; and it consists of these three general parts:

- I. Of a Commendation.
- II. Of a Reproof.
- III. A Warning to repent.

I. *A Commendation: I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful Martyr, who was slain among you where Satan dwelleth.* Which Commendation consists of two parts.

I. That the Church of *Pergamos* retained the Profession of the Name of Christ in all points necessary to the being of a Church; for if she had parted with any point necessary, she must then have ceased to be a Church: but a Church she was by our Lord's own acknowledgment, and therefore by *holding fast*

## The First Sermon.

*fast his Name, and not denying his Faith, we must needs understand, that she had kept intire that form of sound words, the Apostolical Creed which St. John had left amongst them.*

2. That which heightned her praise, was, that she had done this in such a place where there was so great Temptations to Apostacy: *First, Where Satan's seat was, (i. e.)* where there were so many *Idol-temples*, that no place in *Asia* could shew so many; as if *Pergamos* had been Satans principal Court in that part of the World. *Secondly,* Where by consequence there was likely to be, and where indeed there was a great Persecution of the Gospel, under which *Antipas a Faithful Martyr* of Jesus Christ, whose Zeal and Courage was an Example to the rest, *was slain.*

This is the Commendation of the Church of *Pergamos*, that in such a place, and at such a time, she had held fast the Profession of the fundamental Truths of the Gospel, that she had held fast the Name of Christ, and had not denied his Faith. But there follows,

II. *A Reproof: But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the Doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the Children of Israel to eat things sacrificed to Idols, and to commit*

commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. (i. e. ) Although they had the Foundation of the Faith, yet within the Communion of that Church the Doctrine of *Balaam*, and the Doctrine of the *Nicolaitans* was taught and practised: She had suffered Damnable Doctrines, and Wicked Practices to take place, which were likely enough to endanger the subverting of the whole Christian Faith professed amongst them. But more particularly,

I. The Doctrine of *Balaam* was openly taught amongst them; and that was, the lawfulness of joyning with Idolaters in the Worship of their Idols: For this was the *Stumbling-block* which *Balaam* laid before the Children of *Israel*, not only drawing them to carnal Fornication with the Daughters of *Moab*, but spiritual Fornication also with their Idols. Now it seems there was such a grievous Persecution of the Church at *Pergamos*, that some of that Communion, to ease the Church from it, Taught that it was lawful to Sacrifice to Idols, and to have External Communion with Idolaters in their Worship, to wit, by eating things sacrificed to Idols, pretending, as we may gather from the Commendation given them in the former verse, that if they did but still hold fast the Name of Christ, and not deny any necessary point

of his Faith, their External Compliance with Idolaters in their Worship, would not deserve any severe Reproof ; but that because they should still retain the Name and Essence of a true Church, they should therefore sufficiently approve their Fidelity to Christ, notwithstanding their burning Incense, and offering Sacrifice, and giving Divine Honours by their outward Acts, to that which is not God.

2. The Doctrine of the *Nicolaitans* was also held amongst them, that is, a Doctrine that tended to a Licentious Life, and the Corruption of good Manners : and it is called *the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans*, from *Nicolas* the Deacon, who being upbraided for doting too much upon his fair Wife, to shew that he was not to be blamed upon that account, made a prostitution of her to all Corners : Which lewd Example had, it seems spread its Contagion into some of the *Asian Churches*, especially at *Pergamos*, where many of them held Community of Women to be lawful ; which was so vile and detestable a Doctrine, that God is here said to hate it : So that the Doctrines for tolerating of which, the Church of *Pargamos* is here reprehended, were such as grated very near upon the Foundations of Christianity, the former leading to Idolatry, the latter to an impure and vicious Life. A very strange corruption of the State of that Church, in so short

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short a time from the first Plantation of it!  
Now,

III. We have in this Message of Jesus to the Church of *Pergamos*, a warning to repent, and to make hast to repent too: *Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and fight against them with the Sword of my mouth.* And what was she to repent of, but of suffering those Corruptions in Doctrine and Practice to prevail in her Communion, for which she was reprov'd before? And how was she to repent, but by reforming those abuses, and casting out of her Communion those that would not be reformed, and returning to the Primitive Purity of her Faith, and Worship, and Manners? And if she would not do this, Jesus threatned that he would suddenly take the matter into his own hands, and cut them off by the Sword of his Mouth, from being a Church at all, who were so soon degenerated from a pure Church; and it is reasonable to believe, that upon this warning she did repent and reform: for she was not speedily cut off, as God had threatned she should be if she did not Repent, but continued a Church for many Ages afterwards, till at length falling again into great Corruptions of Doctrine and Manners, she, with all the other Six Churches of *Asia*, written to by our Lord, fell to be no Church at all; and the Temples, wherein the Name of Christ was called up-

on are now become Turkish *Mosques*: and so the burden of *Pergamos* was fulfilled.

And now having given you this Account of the State of the Church of *Pergamos*, as it was represented by our Lord himself, I am much mistaken, if from this Authority we may not be able to justify the Reformation of the Church of *England*, against the most specious and popular Exceptions which they of *Rome* make against our Reformation: And this I shall endeavour to do under these three Heads.

*First*, That in this Church, whilst it was in Communion with, and Subjection to the Church of *Rome*, there were notorious Abuses and Errours both in Doctrine and Worship, added to the Profession of the Common Faith.

*Secondly*, That upon this Supposition we might and ought to reform our selves, as we have done.

*Thirdly*, That the main Objections which they of the *Roman* Church do bring, and whereby they seek to stagger those of our Communion, and to fright them into their own, may by this instance of the Message of Christ to the Church of *Pergamos*, be demonstrated to be vain and fallacious and therefore by no means fit to remove us from our steadfastness.

*First*,

*First*, That in this Church, as in all others that were in Communion with the Church of Rome, there were notorious Abuses and Errours introduced into the Faith and Worship of Christians : And *First*, As in the Church of *Pergamos*, so in these Churches there were Doctrines and Practices leading to Idolatry ; I wish that were all, but it is not all ; for Idolatry it self, if it be possible for us to know what it is, was practised, and that practice not only connived at, but encouraged and commanded ; and of this sort were the practices of *Adoring the Host*, *Praying to Saints, to dead Men and Women*, and *Worshipping of Images*, contrary to the whole tenor of the Scripture, providing that we should *Worship the Lord our God*, and that *him only we should serve*. And it is very observable, that when we urge them with these things, they defend themselves from Idolatry by the use of such distinctions, as 'tis impossible for the common People to save themselves by, if indeed these distinctions would do the business. As for Doctrines tending to licentiousness of Life and Manners, what can be more evidently such, than the easie terms upon which they promised forgiveness of Sins, and security from Hell ; *Confession to a Priest with attrition* being reckoned sufficient to receive a Pretorial Absolution, which shall be valid in Heaven, as also the Invention of *Purgatory*,  
and



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and the Power of the Church to shorten the pains of it by *Indulgences*, by applying the *treasure of the Churches Merits*, by *Masses* and *Prayers*, with a great many abuses of this nature? And besides all these, what shall we say to their Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, their *Half-communion*, their *Latin-service*, their *Sacrifice of the Mass*, for which there is no President or Rule in the Scriptures, or in Antiquity; but plain and full consent there is both of the one, and of the other against them? But now to all this, they make one general Reply, and tell us, that the Church, meaning the *Roman Church*, hath not erred in these points, because she cannot err at all; for she is the *Mother* and *Mistress* of all Churches, and the Standard of Catholick Unity and Faith; she is that *One Catholick Church*, which cannot fail, to which Christ has promised his perpetual Presence and Assistance, that *the gates of Hell shall never prevail against her*; and of which St. Paul said, that she is *the pillar and ground of the Truth*. In a word, that whatsoever is by her defined, is infallibly true, and therefore that these Doctrines and Practices are neither damnable Errors and Sins, nor Errors and Sins at all. Now if indeed such promises were made to that Church, we should be brought into a very great strait, and not very well know whether we should believe the Scripture speaking against the Doctrines and Practices

Practices imposed by that Church, or the Scripture speaking to us to believe and do, as that Church requires: But first of all, we say, that whatsoever Promises were made to the Catholick Church they do not belong only to the Church of *Rome*, which is but a part of it; and that these Promises, that *the gates of Hell should not prevail against the Church*, and that *Christ would be with his Church to the end of the World*, amounted to no more than this, that she should be preserved from so much error, as would utterly destroy the Being of a Church, not from all Error whatsoever; but that no Promise in particular was made to the Church of *Rome*, so much as to secure her from Fundamental Errors utterly destructive of the Being of a Church, especially since *St. Paul* writing to the Church of *Rome*, plainly supposes, that it was possible for them to be quite cut off from the Body of Christ, *Rom. 11. 21, 22.* where speaking of the rejection of the *Jews*, he hath these words: *For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but towards thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.* Which had been vain words, if it had been impossible by vertue of any priviledge conferred upon the See of *Peter* for the Church of *Rome* not to continue in God's goodness,

ness, or it be an infallible truth that she shall not be cut off. We do what we can to find the infallibility of the *Roman Church* in the Scriptures; but if we cannot find it, there is much more reason to conclude, that she hath erred, because some of her Doctrines and Practises do seem to us apparently to contradict the Scripture, than to believe she is infallible, because she says so of her self. But to this they say, that we mis-interpret those Scriptures, which seem to condemn what they profess and practice, and in short, that we cannot arrive to certainty of the true sense of Scripture, without the Testimony of an Infallible Interpreter, which the Church is. Well, for the present I will suppose this; but then this will be the consequence of the Supposition, that 'tis impossible for that Church ever to convince me, or any reasonable Man of her own Infallibility by the Scriptures: For when she tells me that Christ hath said, *Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it, and that the Church is the Pillar and ground of truth, and Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the World*; she supposes that the Promise of Infallibility to her self is so plainly made, that every Man, who has a mind to understand the truth, may be certain of the true sense of the words. But if I may arrive at a certain sense of these Scriptures, without the Testimony

stimony of an Infallible Interpreter, then why may I not be as certain of the sence of other Texts, as plain as these, without such an Interpreter? It seemsto me, that our Saviour said, *Drink ye All of this*, and therefore that you of the *Roman* Church may as well take the Bread, as the Cup from the Laity. It seems to me, that St. Paul calls the *Communion of Christ's Body, Bread*; *The B R E A D which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ*: and your Church says, 'tis Bread no longer after Consecration. It seems to me, that the same St. Paul speaks for a whole Chapter against Praying in an unknown Tongue, and yet your Church doth it. It seems also to me that the Author to the *Hebrews* doth absolutely say: That *Christ was offered once for all*, and that *he sat down thenceforth at the right hand of God*; but you pretend to fetch him down from Heaven, and offer him a Thousand times in a Day. It seems to me, that God has forbidden the making of Images to Worship them, as absolutely and universally, as words could do it, and yet you Picture God, and make Similitudes of the Blessed Trinity, and Images of the Saints, and Worship them when you have done: I demand now why I may not be certain of the true sence of these places upon as reasonable grounds, as you suppose I may be of those, which in your Judgment conclude for the Infallibility of your Church?

If

If I may, then I am sure the Scripture condemns what you say and do in these points; but if I may not be reasonably assured, that I understand these (in my judgment) plain places of Scripture, because I want an Infallible Judge to Interpret for me; then I demand again why do you urge me with those Scriptures, that, as you pretend, prove the Infallibility of your Church? For as yet I am not perswaded of the Infallibility thereof, though I would gladly be perswaded of it. If you say, this is the Interpretation of the Church concerning them, which is Infallible, and therefore you are to believe it, I think any body but a Child, would reply, that that is the very thing in question; and therefore that you cannot convince any Man of your Infallibility, unless he will take your word for it, because he cannot infallibly know the true sense of Scripture giving testimony to it, before he believes it without any testimony from Scripture at all: So that it is to no purpose to go about to perswade any reasonable Man, that your Church is Infallible, till he doth already believe it, that is, till it is a needless thing to do it, because he does believe it already. And therefore when all is done, we must be content to understand the plain places of Scripture, without an Infallible Judge, and to find out the rest, as well as we can; and if the Scripture plainly condemns what you say and do, we have more reason from thence  
to

to conclude that you have erred, than to conclude that you cannot err, because you say so of your selves.

And indeed I look upon this Pretence to Infallibility, to be an Error of the most pernicious consequence, because it seals them up under all the rest, and adds incorrigibleness, which is the highest degree of obstinacy, to all their other Errors; and it is so much the more shameless, because the whole World that was in Communion with them, groaned for a Reformation before the Council of *Trent*. One of their own Popes said, *We confess many abominable abuses and grievauces, have been for these many years last past in the holy See; and we look upon our selves concerned to endeavour a Reformation the more, because we see the whole World doth most earnestly desire it.* At the Council of *Trent*, the Embassadours of several Princes desired earnestly the Cup for the People, the Marriage of the Clergy, Service in a known Tongue, and the Reformation of divers other matters; in which Christendom would have reformed it self, if *Italy* would have suffered it: *Italy* I say, who to hinder a general Reformation, filled the Council of *Trent* with more Bishops, than came from all parts of Christendom besides.

*Secondly,*

*Secondly*, Upon this Supposition the Church of *England* might and ought to reform it self, as it hath done : for we find that the Church of *Pergamos*, which was not overrun with so many false Doctrines and corrupt Practices, as those of the *Roman* Church I have mentioned, was required by our Lord Jesus himself to remove those Errors and Corruptions which had crept into her ; and if she did not presently return to her Primitive Purity, she was threatned to be cut off. Indeed it had been a much more desirable thing, that the whole *Western* Church, and more desirable still, that the *East* and the *West* had both united in a Reformation ; it had been a blessed thing, if by a Free and General Council of all the Bishops in the Christian World, an Universal Reformation had been made ; but the latter perhaps was improbable, by reason of the vast distances of some Christian Churches from one another ; and the former was made impossible, by the over-ruling Power of *Italy* : which therefore was to be done upon particular Churches, by common consent ; and perhaps there must never be a farther Reformation till the Day of Judgment. It was very reasonable, and very necessary therefore, that Christian Kingdoms should proceed in Provincial and National Councils, to reform themselves, as this Church hath done under her Kings and Bishops, Parliaments and Convocations ;  
that

that is, by all that Authority which could be desired to make a publick Reformation within the limits of this particular Church. And this proceeding has been Authorized by the Examples of the best Ages of the Church, when it was thought fit not always to tarry for General Councils, but very often for particular Churches to proceed out of hand to the rooting out of Errour and Heresie, and to the Reforming of whatsoever they thought amiss amongst themselves: and for this, we are to appeal to the Councils of *Laodicea*, *Gangra*, *Carthage*, and many others, which are no General Councils.

To conclude: Such Errours as had overspread the Church before the Reformation, were in their own nature, and in their consequences, so pernicious, that every Christian Man ought to reform himself from them, inasmuch as *it is better to obey GOD than man*: Much more might a publick Reformation be made by due Authority.

But we had no regard to the Bishop of *Rome* in this matter, who was to be considered either as Head of the whole Church, or the Patriarch of the *West*, or as the Converter of the *English* Nation; and we were not only in Communion with him, but in subjection to him, when the Reformation was made: so that what cause soever there might be for it, the Reformation was however Schismatical.

*Obje<sup>n</sup>*



To all which, I answer in short :

1. As to the Universal Supremacy, it is a point to which Antiquity is wholly a stranger ; Scripture and the Fathers say nothing of it : *Ignatius*, who so often requires, that *nothing should be done of moment in the Church, without the Bishop*, would have found out some one occasion at least to have said, *Let nothing be done without the Bishop of Rome*, if he had known of any such Priviledge and Power conferred on him by our Lord. But if *Pergamos* were justifiable in removing those Corruptions which were crept into that Church, without staying for the consent of the Bishop of *Rome* ; *England*, in removing more Corruptions, and of equal danger, was to proceed also without his leave, if it could not be had.

2. As to his Patriarchal Power over this Nation, it did not anciently belong to him ; he had it not, when the Council of *Nice* confined him to his own Province, nor when the Council of *Ephesus* decreed, That no Bishop should presume to invade any other Province, which from the beginning had not been under his or his Predecessor's Jurisdiction ; or if any do, and make it his own by force, that he should restore it. And then the Church of *Britain* was free, acknowledging no foreign

reign Jurisdiction; the Power that the Bishop of *Rome* gained here in after-ages, was got by fraud and held by force, and was ever and anon disputed, and gainfayed, and overruled; and surely no Injury was done him, when that Authority was resumed, which he had usurped.

3. As to the Conversion of the *Saxons* by *Austin*, sent hither by Pope *Gregory*, I say, it follows not, if long since the Inhabitants of this Island received any benefit from *Rome*, therefore they should in all Ages be exposed to the Usurpations of that place afterwards; nor that because we once received true Religion from *Rome*, therefore Posterity must receive also false Doctrines from thence, when it should please her to send them hither: But in truth Christianity had been planted here long before, by St. *Paul* himself in all probability, and that in the Reign of *Tiberius*, before *Rome* her self had received the Christian Faith. And the *British* Bishops, whom *Austin* found here, would by no means submit to the Authority of the *Roman* Legate.

And so much for the right that this particular Church had to reform her self. I come now

*Thirdly*, To consider some of those specious Pretences and Objections by which they

## The First Sermon.

go about to weaken the stedfastness of our People in the Communion of our Church, and to draw them to theirs :

1. They say, How was it possible that Errours could creep into the Church, of that nature with those which we charge upon them? There must have been great Opposition made to any the least design of such an alteration in the State of Religion; and we meet with no such account of things in History : Therefore these are not Innovations, but the ancient Doctrine and Practice of the Church. To omit this, that concerning most of their Innovations, we can very nearly shew the time when they were brought in, but can plainly shew, that there was a time when they were not. I answer, it is much more easie to conceive, that in a thousand Years time Errour should creep into that Church by degrees, and without noise, than that in a Church planted by an Apostle, as *Pergamos* was, guarded by the Angel or Bishop placed there by an Apostle, as *Pergamos* was, should so soon tolerate the Doctrines of the *Balaamites* and *Nicolaitans*, even while their Apostle was alive, and therefore very soon after he departed from them.

2. They say, that the perpetual Succession of their Bishops from St. *Peter* is an Argument

gument of the Succession of true Doctrine amongst them in the purity thereof; but behold an Apostolical Church in which a Bishop succeeded an Apostle yet alive, corrupted in her Doctrine and Worship! can they have greater, can they have as great an assurance of a perpetual uninterrupted Succession, after so many Ages, as the Church of *Pergamos* had, before one Age was gone? or does their Infallibility grow with their Succession? or, the farther they are removed from the beginning of the Church, are they the surer still that they teach nothing, but what was taught at first?

3. They say, we are departed from the whole Church of Christ that was visible every where upon the face of the Earth, when the Reformation was begun, seeing there was then no Communion in the World, nor had been long before, that professed the same Doctrine in all points, which the Reformation brought in. Now in great liberality to admit for once that the whole visible Church had corrupted its way, as the Church of *Rome* has done, which yet is not true; but I say, admitting it, what will then come of it? That we departed from the whole Church of Christ? No: but that we departed from the general Errours and Corruptions of it, and by that could not be said to depart from

*The First Sermon.*

the whole Church, whereof we our selves were a part, unless we departed also from our selves. Nay, but say they, this is to fall into another damnable Errour, and that is, that the whole Church of Christ had failed from the Earth, and so that the visible Church had perished for some Ages, till the Reformation brought it to Life again. Not so neither; for we do not say, that the Errours of the Church were of that nature, as to make it cease to be a Church; but that they were in themselves damnable, and that they made the Salvation of all that were in it extremely hazardous; but yet that we hope well of those, who believing the fundamental Doctrines of Christianity maintained in the Church, and wanting means to discover her Corruptions, served God according to their knowledge: so that we do not say, the Church had perished, but that her Purity had been lost, even as *Pergamos* was a Church, and so acknowledged by our Lord himself, because she held fast the Foundation of the Creed, while yet she was corrupted with notorious Errours. To this, according to their usual way of Arguing, they would reply, that the case is not the same, between a particular Church, as *Pergamos* was, and the whole Visible Church, from which *Luther* and those that followed him separated themselves; But then I would answer, That the case is the same, as to the matter

matter we are upon ; for if a particular Church, though under great Errours, may yet be a part of the whole Church, by like reasons, if the whole Church were over-spread with foul Errours, it would nevertheless still remain the whole Church, and there is as great an obligation to depart from those Errours, in the latter case, as in the former ; and a particular Church by departing from such Errours, does no more depart from the whole Church, than she did from herself.

4. They pretend Antiquity for their Errours, and are often asking that shrewd Question, as they deem it, *where was your Religion before Luther?* I would answer this Question with another, That after the Angel of the Church of *Pergamos* had purged away the Corruptions of that Church, *Where was the Church of Pergamos before that Reformation?* Every one of common sense would answer, it was where it is now, and where it ever was, since it was first a Church ; for the Reformation took away nothing that belonged to the Nature and Essence of a Church, but only the Shame and the Corruption of it. So I say, still admitting, what yet can never be proved, that there was none for 500 Years together, that declared against the Abuses and Errours that were crept

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into the Church ; admitting this, I say, that our Church, before our Reformation or even before *Luther* was, even amongst our selves, where the *Roman* Corruptions had prevailed, only it was then a corrupted, now it is a Reformed Church. That which makes *Rome* a true Church, is, that she retains the Profession of the Creeds, and the Administration of the Sacraments. That which makes her a Corrupt Church, is, that she has added as many more Articles of Faith, as there were before, and brought in Idolatrous Practices into her Worship. Such a true Church, and such a corrupted Church, was this of *England* before the Reformation ; but the Truth we have reserved, and the Corruption we have cast away, and so have added Purity to the Truth of our Christian Communion ; we have kept that which is ancient, thrown aside that which was lately introduced, and so are a Church built upon the same Foundation that we were built upon before, but have thrown away the *Hay* and *Stubble* that was laid upon it. But if the instance of the Church of *Pergamos* be not sufficient to answer this Question, I shall add another to it, and that is *Hezekiah's* Reformation, who took away the *High-places*, burnt the *Images*, and cut down the *Groves*, which had stood in a probability four or five hundred years, for this was the abatement of the commendation

dation of good Kings before him, that *nevertheless the High-places were not taken away*:  
 And moreover, this Corruption had spread  
 it self from one end of *Judah* to the other.  
 Here was universality of Places, and the Pre-  
 scription of some Ages, to give Authority  
 to it; notwithstanding which, *Hezekiah* to  
 his immortal Honour, made a Reformation.  
 And now the Question, *Where our Church*  
*was before Luther?* is just such another as  
 this would have been, *Where was the Church*  
*of Judah before Hezekiah?* And indeed such  
 a demand was made; But by whom do you  
 think? Truly, by none of God's Church;  
 but which is little for the credit of such Que-  
 stions, by *Rabshakeh*, that great Blasphemer  
 of the God of *Israel*: For thus I find him,  
 speaking to the *Jews*: *But if ye say unto me*  
*We trust in the Lord our God; is not that he,*  
*whose High-places, and whose Altars Hezeki-*  
*ah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah*  
*and Jerusalem, Ye shall Worship before this*  
*Altar in Jerusalem?* 2 Kings 18. 22. By  
 which Question it is most apparent, that the  
 corruption amongst the People in this mat-  
 ter, had been so general, and ancient, that  
 their Neighbours took this false Worship of  
 theirs, for their Religion; and therefore  
 reckoned that *Hezekiah* had introduced a  
 New Religion, because he had but reformed  
 the Old. I need not make any application  
 of so plain an Instance.

5. They



5. They sometimes say, That since we confess them to be a true Church, and consequently to hold no Fundamental Errors, we ought to have tarried in a Church, in which we granted a possibility of Salvation; and we may now without danger return to their Communion. But it is plain, that not only those Errors which do unchurch a People, but even those that make their Salvation hazardous, are to be reformed. *Pergamos* was still a Church, notwithstanding her Errors; but yet was obliged to reform them.

6. *And lastly*, Since we grant them to be a true Church, and Christ can have but one Church upon Earth, and there is but one Church, out of which there are no ordinary means of Salvation, we must conclude ourselves to be no true Church, nor part of it, because we are separated from them, and consequently to be cut off from the hope of Salvation. I answer, That there is indeed but one Catholick Church, as we confess in our Creed, whereof the Church of *Rome* is one part, and one of the worst in the world, and the Church of *England* another, and perhaps one of the best. I do grant also, that Salvation is not to be ordinarily had out of the Catholick Church; but then I add, that

in that part of it, which is best reformed, it is to be obtained with great safety and assurance ; and in that part of it, which is very corrupt, and refuses to be reformed, not without great difficulty and danger : And though these parts of the Church are separated in Communion from one another, it does not follow, that either of them must be the Catholick Church, and the other no part of it at all ; but that there is but one part which can free her self from the blame of the Separation, and that it concerns every Man, as much as his Soul is worth, to chuse that Communion, which does not only afford him the means that are absolutely necessary to Salvation, but those also without the mixture of such false Doctrines and unlawful Practices, which nothing but invincible Ignorance, or Infirmary that is very pardonable, can reconcile with the hope of any Man's Salvation. But if they will not receive this Answer, but still contend, that because we charge each other with Heresie and Schism, 'tis impossible both parts can be within the Unity of the Catholick Church ; and therefore that we granting them to be a true Church, must confess our selves to be none. I know not what they will get by this ; but that if this be true, we must revoke all that charitable hopes of their Salvation, which we would fain nourish : If either they or we must needs  
be

be quite out of the Church, and can have no benefit by the Promises of the Gospel, and the Covenant of Grace ; doth it follow that therefore we must go over to their Communion? No : But it follows on the other side, that we have greater reason than we thought we had, to stay where we are ; because it seems, as they say, one part must needs be out of the Church, and want all means of Salvation. For we confess our selves to be much more sure , that our Communion is a safe way to Salvation, than we are, that theirs is a way at all: And if they will not let us believe both together, instead of giving us a reason why we should be *Papists*, they give as a new one, why we should not. This I say, to shew only, what Answer they may get by trying to make an unreasonable advantage to themselves by our charity and moderation : not that I believe their Errors have made them cease from being a part of the Church, any more than the Errors of *Pergamos* made her cease to be so ; nor, that it is impossible the Reformed, and the Unreformed part of Christendom should be within the Pale of that one Church, which we profess to believe in the Creed, any more than it was impossible for the Church of *Pergamos* to have been a part of the Catholick Church, both before and after her Reformation.

And

And thus I have gone through the task I  
set my self, and I hope need to make no A-  
pology for entertaining you with a Contro-  
versie of this nature, which indeed ought to  
be no Controversie amongst us. But if it  
were needful, I have this to say, Whereas  
the Church of *England* does not pretend to be  
an Infallible Guide or Judge, and yet requires  
the People to believe as she believes, to pro-  
fess what she professeth, and to do what she  
enjoyneth; it is very fit that her Ministers  
should sometimes make it plain, that she re-  
quires this, because she has reason so to do,  
and is not in these points deceived, though  
she does not pretend that she cannot err in  
any. I know not whether I have made the  
things I have discoursed plain enough to eve-  
ry understanding; but whether that be so or  
not, yet every one may perceive, that we  
appeal to his Reason for the Truth and Ho-  
nesty of our Cause; and for my own part, if  
I understood nothing else of the Merits of it,  
I had rather be of a Church which pretends  
to guide me with Reason, than of another  
that would govern me without it, and that  
because the former is likely to take more care  
not to mislead me, than the latter needs to  
do, which when it has gained me to an impli-  
cit Faith, and a blind Obedience, may lead  
me whither she pleases. As for what I have  
now said, I declare in the Presence of God,  
that

that I have offered nothing to you, but what I believe my self ; and farther, that I am not conscious to my self of any reason, why I am fixed in the Communion of this Church, in opposition to the other ; but a full Conviction of the Errors of that Church, which if I should profess or practice, I could not entertain the least hopes of Salvation : And we who are thus convinced, are, as I take it, bound in Conscience to take seasonable opportunities of confirming our Brethren in our Communion, and enabling them as well as we can, to make it appear, that the Arguments and the Answers of the other side are unsatisfactory and vain, as I have in some part endeavoured to shew at this time.

We should indeed not be unwilling to take pains to recover those to the knowledge of the Truth, that are educated in damnable Errours ; but there is much more reason to do all we can to retain those in the profession of the Truth, that have been educated in it, seeing if they revolt, we cannot have that hope of their Salvation, which we would fain have of theirs, who want sufficient means to discover them.

It were a blessed state of the Church indeed, if all being united in true Faith and Worship, we had nothing to do but to persuade and exhort men, and to take care of them, that they live answerably thereto ; but  
since

since we have two Worksupon our hands, to guard you against Errour, as well as to warn you against a wicked Life, I do not see how we can discharge our Duty, but by doing one as well as the other : And that I may not say nothing to the latter, I am to tell you, in the Conclusion, that we do not make the Communion of the best Church in the World to be all in all ; a Man may go to Hell in the Communion of a pure Church ; and without true Repentance and Reformation, the best and purest Church that ever was since the Gospel began, could have done him no service : And I take it to be as great a Corruption as can be readily thought of, for any Church to pretend to save men by a Trick, and send them to Heaven any other way than the plain way of keeping the Commandments of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ : Keep therefore the pure Profession of the Christian Faith, but withal, keep a good *Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards man* : *Hold fast the form of sound words* : But still remember, that if your *Works* be not answerable, your *Faith* is vain : For *not the hearers of the Law, but the doers thereof shall be justified* : *Not he that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the will of our Father which is in Heaven.*

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## The Second Sermon.

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MATTH. XVIII. 7.

*Wo unto the World because of Offences ; for it must needs be that Offences come ; But wo to that Man by whom the Offence cometh.*

**T**HE great end of the Gospel is to bring Mankind to Salvation, and in order thereunto, to convert them from Sin and from all dangerous Errour, and to lead them to a right Faith, and a Holy Life : But it is too evident, that this end is not attained Universally. And if any one should be tempted to suspect that the Christian Religion is not therefore a Divine Revelation, because it has in so great part failed of the end which it pretended to pursue ; he may be easily brought to assurance again, by considering the vast good which Christianity hath done in the World, but especially by observing that the Gospel hath foretold, that all Men would not be-  
D
lieve



lieve and obey. Our blessed Lord himself testified, that many were called, but few were chosen; and that strait was the Gate and narrow the way that leadeth to Life, and few there be that find it: Nay, inasmuch as he hath forewarned us of a Day of Judgment, and hath told us beforehand, That the word which he hath spoken, the same should judge us at the last Day. This was a manifest Declaration, that he did not pretend to lead Men to Faith and Repentance, by such means as could not but be effectual, but only by such as were sufficient, if we would in any measure comply with his gracious Methods; and it was also a plain intimation that a great many would be never the better, but the worse for these means that God had provided for their Salvation; and that some for not receiving them, others for not improving them, would fall into greater Condemnation.

But our Saviour did not foretel these things only, but the *Causes* of them too, and what it was that would obstruct the Progress and Design of his Religion. For this is the importance of those words of his, which I have now chosen for my Subject: *We be to the World because of Offences; for it must needs be that Offences come.*

By Offences, or Scandals, we are here, and almost every where in the New Testament, to understand those Temptations to  
Sin,

Sin, and Inducements to Errour, which some Men lay in the way of others: They are sometimes otherwise exprest, *Snares, Stumbling-blocks and occasions of fallings*; for the thing meant by all these expressions is the same. Now concerning *Offences*; our Saviour affirms two things in the words I have read: First, That *they would come*; nay, that it *must needs* be that they would come; *i. e.* that Men would arise who should hinder the prevailing of Christianity as much as in them lay, or pervert the Design of it to the great danger of other Mens Souls, who were not well established in the Truth. Secondly, That the consequence of these Scandals would be very sad and pernicious, that is, that very many would stumble at them, and be turned out of the right way. For this must be implied in those words, *Wo to the World because of Offences*: For, 1. It is no ordinary Misery or Calamity which is expressed in denouncing a *Wo*; and this *Wo* must likewise refer to those that are turned aside by the Scandals and Temptations that others lay before them; because if Offences were not taken as well given, it seems not easy to say why they should produce so much Sin and Misery as is implied in denouncing *Wo*, upon their account. Besides, our Saviour did *afterwards* express the guilt and misery of those that should give Offence, by it self

## The Second Sermon.

*But Wo be to the Man by whom the Offence cometh:* That is, to every Man that by his own Wickedness laith a Stumbling-block in his Brothers way, and draws him into Sin. So that in the former part of this Verse, that mischief is exprest which would come of Offences, because they would be *taken*. And then, 2. It is also implied, that the mischief would not only be in it self great, but likewise of a very large extent; for it is said, *Wo to the World* because of Offences; where by the *World* we cannot understand less than a very great part of Mankind, who should be diverted by Offences, either from receiving the Gospel at all, or from entertaining it in the Purity and Power thereof.

There are therefore these Two Heads which I am to speak to.

- I. That Offences would certainly be given; *It must needs be that Offences come.*
- II. That they would do very great mischief in the World: *Wo be to the World because of Offences.*

Which Two Points being illustrated, I intend to apply them in order to farther Instruction.

- I. That Offences would certainly be given: *It must needs be that Offences come.* By which words I do not understand, that it was absolutely impossible but Offences must come; for

for God has not necessitated any Man to Sin: but the meaning is this, that it was in it self probable, and that in the highest degree, that Offences would come; and moreover, God certainly foresaw that they would arise, if he did not interpose his Almighty Power to hinder them, which he determined not to do. And this is a sufficient ground of the certainty of the Prediction; It must needs be that Offences come. Now the true notion of Offence being this, that it is an occasion given whereby Men are either discouraged from the Profession of the Truth, or encouraged in Practices contrary to it. I shall 1. lay before you some instances under this general Head: And 2. Shew why it was not to be expected but that Offences would be given.

The principal instances are such as these:

1. Opposing the Gospel with outward Violence, and making it the interest of men to renounce the Truth, as they love their Fortunes and their Lives: Of which our Saviour spake in the famous Parable of the Sower, where he explained him *that received the seed into thorny places*, to be one that *heareth the word, and with joy receiveth it, yet hath he not root in himself*; and not being fortified with deep resolution, *he dureth but for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by, and by he is offended*, Matth. 30. 20, 21. This was that Of-

fence which our Saviour warned his Disciples of more than of any other. He told them plainly before hand, That they should be *delivered up to Councils, and brought before Governours, and be hated of all men for his Name's sake.* But says he, *He that endureth to the end shall be saved; and he that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me,* Mat. 10. And this is in it self so great an Offence or Stumbling-block, to put Men out of the right way, that sometimes the general word is used to signifie this particular instance only: Thus when our Saviour said, *Blessed is he, whoever shall not be offended in me,* Mat. 11. 6. The meaning is, Blessed is he whom the Example of *John the Baptist's* Sufferings does not fright from being my Disciple. And thus when *Peter* said, *Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended,* Mat. 26. 33. He explain'd his own meaning afterward, by saying, *Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee,* v. 35. But then,

2. Doctrines that give liberty to Lust, and that give ease to guilty Minds without Reformation, are a very dangerous Offence, for they are framed at once to draw Men off from the Truth, and reconcile them to wicked Practice; and therefore they who are under the strongest inclinations to sin, and need

need the most powerful restraints, are most forward to receive them, *i. e.* they who will be sure to make the worst use of them. He that offers a Key to let Sinners into Heaven without Repentance, and keeping the Commandments of God, is sure to meet with sufficient Numbers that will not be over-forward to examine how he came by it. And this is that which makes all Doctrines of this nature Offences, that they are grateful to the corrupt Inclinations of Mankind; not that they carry any appearance of Truth. It had been long enough ere Men could have been perswaded, that particular Confession of Sins to a Man in secret, with a bare purpose not to do the like again, will at any time suffice for the effect of Absolution; if the belief of it were not as much for the ease of the People, as for the advantage of the Priest: Or that bodily Exercise, meer external Works, should either be Godliness, or supply the want of it. These things bear so hard against what we know of God by Reason and by Scripture, that nothing but carnal Interest, and a desire that they should be true, could make way for them, and provide them Entertainment. And what Wonders that can do, was too evident in the beginning of Christianity, when the *Gnostics* seduced no small number of Disciples, by giving Liberty to fleshly Lusts, and discharging them from all

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obligation to confess Christ, when they were to take up his Cross.

3. The mixing of Falshood with Truth, is another great Offence, tending to much Evil; as it meets with persons disposed either too much Credulity, or too much Distrust. By the former, the false Doctrine or unlawful Practice is embraced, because found in the company of Truth; by the latter, Truth it self suspected, and perhaps thrown off, because 'tis disgraced with the company of Follies and Lies. Thus the *Pharisees* recommended their absurd Traditions to the People, because in the same breath they taught them the Law of *Moses*. Thus some of the *Gentiles* were ready to reject Christianity, when they were made to believe it necessary for them also to observe the *Mosaical* Law if they would be Christians. And this is one of the common Scandals of the World, that Truth is so often insincerely represented, and false Doctrines propounded still by the same Authority that holds forth some necessary Truths. And for this reason the Gospel does not allow, but command us to use a Judgment of Discretion; not to reject that which is good, because it comes from the same Authority that requires evil; nor to admit Error, because it is accompanied with truth, but to *prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good.*

4. All Popular Artifices that are used to recommend either wicked Errors or Practices, are also great Offences, and lead many silly Souls astray; of which kind the most obvious are these: An external shew of Strictness and Piety, without real Vertue and Godliness at the bottom of it. And of this the *Pharisees* were the first notable Instance, who placing Religion in abundance of nice Observations, seemed to be the most strict and devout People in the World; and therefore our Saviour knowing the wickedness of their Hearts and Lives, compared them to *whited Sepulchres, that within were full of dead mens bones, and all uncleanness*. And this Offence would be so powerful whenever it should happen, that it seemed good to the Spirit to foretel it expressly, viz. That in the latter Times some should depart from the Faith, giving heed to seducing Spirits, forbidding to Marry, and commanding to abstain from Meats, 1 *Tim.* 4. 1, 2, 3. Another Offence of this kind, which was also expressly foretold, is, pretending the Testimony of Miracles. For says our Saviour himself, *There shall arise false Christs, and false Prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch, that if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect*. Behold, says he, *I have told you before*, *Matth.* 24. 24, 25. And thus St. Paul foretold, that when that wicked one should



*should be revealed, his coming should be after the working of Satan with power and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness. I shall name but one other popular Device for the supporting of error, and that is to denounce Damnation peremptory against all Gainfayers; with which Artifice the Judaizers secured themselves against the Gentile Christians, saying, Except ye be circumcised, and keep the Law of Moses, ye cannot be saved.* Now although every man that has a Tongue, may, if he please, lay this weight upon his Cause, as to exclude all from Salvation that are not of his way; and therefore the threatening be not worthy of a wise Man's thought, till the Merits of the Cause be examined: Yet it has Two notable advantages, that it is framed to work upon the Passions of Men, more than upon their Judgment, and in most Men their Passion is stronger than their Reason, and it may be so used, as to bear the World in hand, that 'tis not Uncharitableness, but meer Pity and Tenderness to the Souls of Men, that compels them to speak so harsh, but so necessary a Truth. And 'tis a wonderful thing to observe how easie Men are to be managed, when on the one side there is a positive Sentence of Damnation to work upon their fears; and on the other, an appearance of serious Charity to win their Affections: for by this Art,

Art, Men of contrary Parties, have with strange success served contrary Opinions and Practices. I cannot, if I were willing, reckon all the Offences of this kind, that is popular and plausible ways of deceiving. But that there would be such, our Saviour did not only foretel in the general, when he said, *It must needs be that Offences come*: but in particular also, when he said, *Beware of false Prophets, which come to you in sheeps-cloathing*, Matth. 7. 15.

5. To this I may add what St. Paul observes, *1 Tim. 6. 5. Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness*. That any thing may be defended as a part of Religion, which makes for worldly Interest. It is no such hard matter to perplex things that are plain, to find colours for denying things that are evident, to hide the weakness or the strength of an Argument, to divert from the Cause to the Person so artificially, as if the Cause went on still, to lose the matter in debate, to make Truth look like Errour, and Errour like Truth, to those that are willing to be deceived; if a Man is resolved to bend all his wit this way, for something may be said for any thing.

6. And lastly, Bad examples of Men professing the true Religion, are another most dangerous Offence: Since I doubt most Men  
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are so framed as to take up their opinions more easily from Authority than from other Argument, and they understand more easily the difference between good and evil Manners, than between strong and weak reasons. And then they will be apt to judge of the Truth or Falshood of a way of Religion by the good or bad Fruits of Practice it brings forth in those that profess it : which doubtless our Saviour intimated in those words ; *Let your light so shine before men, that others seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.* But to hold the Truth in Unrighteousness, is not only a Scandal to those that are in Errour, confirming them that are in their wrong way, but likewise to those that are in the way of Truth, by encouraging them to Sin in like manner ; especially when evil examples are set by those that are particularly obliged to set none but good ones, whose Place or Office, Wealth or Quality, makes them more conspicuous, and gives others any kind of dependence upon them. And because of the pernicious influence of bad examples, we find St. Paul often calling upon the Christians with whom he had to do, to fix their observation upon those that were good: *Brethren, says he, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example ; For many walk of whom I have*

*have often told you, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.*

Thus I have very briefly, considering the largeness of the Subject, shewn what Offences were to come, by laying before you the principal and most obvious Offences, which we know by the Predictions of the Scripture, and alas for the World ! by too sad experience. And now I proceed to the second Point, which was to consider, why it must needs be that Offences should come ; that is, why it was not to be expected, but that these, or such Scandals as these would be given to the World.

And this Inquiry is necessary to be pursued upon this account, if upon no other, that it may appear, that the certainty of Offences coming, did not arise from any defect or fault of the Blessed Gospel of our Saviour. If we consider the Harmless and Dove-like Temper of Christianity, the excellency of its Design, the richness of its Promises, the Divinity of its Rules and Precepts, the Comforts it has in store for all honest Minds, and that instead of running cross to the Interests of Mankind, either here or hereafter, it shews an infallible way to single Persons, and to Communities to be happy in this World, and to all Men to be for ever blessed in the World to come ; We would rather have expected it should

should have been foretold, that no Man in any Age would ever set himself to *oppose* the design of the Gospel, either in whole or in part. If likewise we observe what clear and undeniable Testimonies of Divine Revelation God approved and owned it by, how highly reasonable the Principles thereof are, and how those things which could not be known but by Revelation, yet being once Revealed, do satisfie our Reason, and approve themselves to it; How evident the design thereof is, how plain the Precepts, how few the positive Instructions of it are, and how significant and profitable they are, and how full of Instruction, finally, how manifest those necessary Doctrines are, the belief whereof is necessary to make a Man a Christian; and what that *Mystery of godliness* is, which in the Apostles days was confessed, and *without Controversie*: If we look upon these things and no farther, we should rather have expected that the Doctrine of our Saviour should never have been gainsaid; never perverted, never mingled with Errour, never have given occasion to wrangling and discord and never have become the matter of nice and angry Dispute, but only of an unblamable Faith and Practice. The Gospel of Christ is undoubtedly a *faithful Saying*, or Doctrine clearly revealed, and standing upon evident Testimonies of Divine Revelation

it is also worthy of all acceptation : Why then *must it needs be that Offences come* ? To which I shall give a plain answer in our Saviours words to Nicodemus : *That light is come into the World, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil*, Joh. 3. 18. and therefore *it must needs be that Offences should come*. For the Religion of Christ is not futable to the Spirit of this World, and therefore the World hateth it ; and therefore no wonder if it hath one way or other always sought to obstruct the Progress and Design of it : In a word, it is not the defect, but the exceeding excellence and purity of true Christianity, that has given occasion to the World to oppose it, to pervert it, and to discourage the Profession or Practice of it. For it is a Religion too wise and too good for them that have no mind to be wise and good themselves ; and therefore considering the great corruption of humane Nature, which God would not over-bear by an irresistible Power, but cure by rational means and methods ; no wonder that Offences have come, nay, that our Saviour said *it must needs be that Offences come*. To argue more particularly :

1. The Doctrine of the Gospel is a Doctrine of Manners, lays a severe restraint upon all the unreasonable Lusts of Men, and makes a great many Liberties unlawful, which they

they are for the most part violently inclined to take : And therefore every carnal Man while he so continues, carries within himself a terrible prejudice, a secret Enemy against the Truth as it is in Jesus ; and his Heart riseth with as much anger against that Doctrine of God, that telleth him it is not lawful for him to pursue his worldly and fleshly desires as he would, but to subdue and mortifie them ; as *Herod* when he took his Brother's Wife, expressed against *John the Baptist*, for saying, *it is not lawful for thee to have her.* Man's Nature affecteth a lawless Liberty, and cannot endure to be confined ; it is diseased, and cannot endure to be healed ; and it was therefore likely enough that very many would reject the Physitian, and be angry with those very Remedies that our Heavenly Father has sent. The true and sincere Doctrine of Christ, my Brethren, if it be believed, cannot but make us very uneasie and unquiet while we are conscious of Sin, and are not willing to be reformed, because it reveals to us the Wrath of God against all our unrighteousness and ungodliness ; it forewarns us of a dreadful Sentence at the last day, and of an everlasting Punishment which we are unwilling at the same time to venture, in which we are unwilling to part with our sins, and to reconcile our selves to God by Repentance. And Men that are lovers of Pleasures,

Pleasures, and lovers of Gain, cannot easily admit a Doctrine which gives them as much uneasiness and disturbance as if the point of a Sword were always turned toward their very Hearts. For this reason the *Pharisees* could not endure the Doctrine of Jesus; and this was one Reason why the Heathens opposed it, and persecuted it, and is one Reason why Christians have corrupted it; by finding out other ways to avoid Damnation, than by a lively Faith, and true Repentance, and effectual Reformation, and keeping the Commandments of God. It is this that hath made way for satisfactory Commutations, Merits of others, and the absolute power of the Keys; and all those devices which are good for nothing but to reconcile a wicked Life to the hopes of Heaven, and to entangle the plain sense of those words of Christ; *He that heareth these sayings, and doth them not, I will liken him to a foolish man that built his House upon the Sand, and the winds blew, and the rain fell, and the floods came and beat upon that House, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof*; that is, it suffered an irreparable Ruin.

2. If we consider the Doctrine of Christ, as it is a Doctrine both of Faith and Manners, it is no way framed to serve the ends of ambitious and worldly-minded men, or to help them in pursuing those ends by a pretence



of Religion; and therefore it was not to be expected but in process of time it would be by some or others molded for that purpose, when Opportunity should serve. Our Saviour taught the World no other Principles of Morality, no other Articles of Faith, than what were equally for the Interest of all parts of Mankind to believe and follow; a common good, and an equal benefit was intended in them all. For let them prevail without corruption and alteration, the Honour and Safety of Sovereign Princes is secured, and a quiet and peaceable Life to Subjects; Neighbour-Nations shall give strength and confidence, instead of creating Jealousies to one another; the Master shall be better served, and the Servant better used; the Church by her Doctrine and Spiritual Authority will be a Guard to the State, and receive at the same time Protection from it. Here was no design in Christianity to set up any Nation or party of Men, in opposition and to the disadvantage of all mankind beside; but it plainly aimed at a general good, and under its Penalties requires all its Professors to aim at the same too; and condemns those who are lovers of themselves in opposition to all others, amongst the greatest Offenders. And this Religion, as *Machiavel* well observed, was not calculated for the inspiring of Men with great Designs, such I suppose as his

*Caesar*

## The Second Sermon.

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*Cæsar Borgia* aimed at. It was too plain, too Philolophical, too Innocent and Charitable, to raise an ambitious heat, or to serve it. And therefore it was very likely in process of time, that it should be helped out by other Principles and Doctrines that would bring in the *swelling of worldly Pride* into the Church, as the *African* Fathers, in their Epistle to *Celestine*, called it, and advance one part of it to the depressing of all the rest. But because true Christianity serves no such Design, therefore was our Saviour opposed by the Rulers of the *Jews*; his Doctrine did not tend at all that way, *viz.* to make *Hierusalem* the Mistress of the World, and that all should depend upon her; it did not minister to their ambitious and worldly Hopes, and therefore was not for their turn.

3. If we look upon Christianity as a Rule of Worship, it will still hold true that Offences must needs come, because the Worship it prescribes is a Worship of great simplicity, that has but two or three positive Instructions of Divine Authority, *viz.* the two Sacraments, and the Invocation of God through the Name and Mediation of his Holy Son Jesus. Now this was not likely to be acceptable to the generallity of Mankind, who love rather a pompous number of Ceremonies, and nice observations, than a grave and decent administration of Worship. For

the former does amuse the Senses, and entertain the Imagination, the latter does that but very little in Comparison, and rather satisfies our Reason. But most People are more apt to be affected with things that touch their Fancy than their Judgment. And therefore it was hardly to be expected but in time there would grow very great excesses in this kind, as there did even in St. *Austin's* days, who complained of it not a little in his Epistle to *Januarius*. Neither could it be doubted but such excesses would be accompanied with false Notions of Religion, and of the way to please God: For whereas the excellent design of our Saviour in appointing so small a number of external Observations, leaving the necessary Rules of Decency to be determined by the Church, was this, to take Men off from all pretence of placing the weight of Religion in outward Ceremonies, and by their very Worship to instruct them in Piety and Vertue; and to shew them that God will not be pleased without those things; whereas he did hereby effectually declare, that God who is a Spirit, would be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth; that is, with the Affections of a pious Heart, and the Obedience that is expressed in a good Life. The corrupt Nature of Man is as averse from this, as 'tis fond of the other; and desires to please God by so easy a Religion as that  
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which runs out into a world of Myſteries, and Shews, and Obſervations; and ſeems to ſave them the labour of ſubduing their Luſts and Paſſions, and of ſerving God by a righteous and holy Life. And this was one thing that made the Primitive Chriſtians contemptible and odious to the Heathens, that they had ſo few Rites and Ceremonies, ſo plain and ſimple a form of Divine Service; but one Altar, but one Mediator, no Tutelar Deities and Patrons, no throngs of petty Gods; but one or two Myſteries, and thoſe too plain and inſtructing, without Pomp and Amuſement; for ſuch cauſes as theſe, they reckoned the Chriſtians little better than Atheiſts, believing that a Religion which made no ſtately ſhew, to be as good as none at all. 'Tis true, that God himſelf appointed a Form of Divine Service to the *Iſraelites*, that conſiſted of a vaſt number of Ceremonies; but beſides this, that they were to be the Types to diſcover the *Meſſias* when he ſhould appear: There was another end of Divine Providence obſervable in that Conſtitution, which was this; that they having a ſtately and Myſtical Form of Worſhip of their own, might be leſs under a Temptation of learning of the Idolatrous Nations round about them; whoſe numerous and gaudy Ceremonies in their Worſhip, would have bewitched the Jews ten times more than

they did, if they had not been able to vye with them. But God by his Prophet said, That he gave them Statutes that were not good, to be sure not the best, in themselves, but considering the time, the best for them. For when God sent his Son into the World, who was to teach all mankind to Worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth, and to convert the Nations from Idolatry, the Scheme of the *Mosaic* Worship was taken down, and the Church was furnished with nothing but Prayers and Praises, two Sacraments and one Mediator. But by all this it appears, that the design of the Gospel in this matter runs counter to the fond and foolish inclinations of mankind; and therefore that Offences were ready to come upon this account also.

So that considering the temper and design of the Gospel, it was a Religion too good for a Wicked World, too wise for a vain and foolish World; I mean, it was too good and too wise, to escape Opposition, and all change; the World would either try to keep it out, or when that was in vain to attempt any longer to square and form it better to its own purposes and inclinations. It was upon this account, *viz.* of the design of the Gospel, which was exalted above a worldly Spirit, that a peculiar temper was required by our Saviour, in order to the embracing of his Doctrine

**Doctrin.** A Spirit of Honesty and Sincerity, of Humility and Teachableness; love of the Truth, willingness to learn, patience of Reproof, and the like; without which Dispositions, the common prejudices against Christianity would certainly hinder the efficacy of those Arguments and Motives, by which it was recommended. And therefore since God did not intend by an irresistible act upon the minds of Men to over-rule them into a compliance with the Gospel, it was not to be expected but that it should be first of all greatly opposed, as it was; and afterwards insincerely handled, as it hath been: And this, although the Doctrin of the Gospel is peculiarly furnished with means to infuse a wise and honest disposition into them that want it. For those means are consistent with the liberty of Humane Nature, and after all, Men may be the worse and not the better for them. Nothing could in its own Nature be more fit to awaken Men to Consideration, and to lead them to Honesty and Wisdom, and to conquer all worldly and carnal prejudices, than the promise of Eternal Life, and the warning of a day of Judgment to come. It is in this that the great power of the Gospel to mend the tempers of Men consists:

sists : But when all is done in this kind that can be done, Men may choose their Portion in this World, because they will not hearken and consider. And it well became Divine Providence to permit those to resist the Holy Spirit, and the means of Salvation, who would not be reclaimed by any reasonable means ; and that for these three Reasons.

1. That there might be a clear difference made between the good and honest heart on the one side, and the insincere and incourigible on the other : Which had been impossible, if God had by his Omnipotence equally overborn all Men into the Faith and Obedience of Christ. But as the case stands, the Gospel is a Touchstone that distinguisheth between the Humble and Sincere, and the Unteachable and Dishonest part of Mankind. And the Offences which are given by those that do not receive the Truth in the love of it, are a farther trial of the sincerity and ingenuity of Men, as St. Paul said of one kind of Offences : *There must be Heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest.* And therefore notwithstanding Offences, that remains true which our Saviour said, *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me ;*

*me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out, Joh. 6. 37. i. e.* All sincere and humble Persons, who are committed to the special care of Christ, to train them up to eternal Life, will be sufficiently armed against Temptations, and the Offences that are laid in their way, shall but clear their sincerity and wisdom more to the World, and turn to the encrease of their reward.

2. As the sincerity of the Righteous, so neither had the proper advantages and power of Truth been seen, had God interposed his irresistible power to prevent all Offences and Endeavours against the Truth: And therefore he was pleased to suffer Error and Folly to appear upon the stage of the World, even after the heavenly Wisdom of the Gospel was made known to Mankind, that by its own strength it might struggle with all kind of opposition, and prevail, and be justified of her Children.

3. By this way the Wisdom of Divine Providence, and the truth of God's Word, and his care over the Church is seen more illustriously, than if Offences had never been suffered. That Promise that the Gates of Hell should never prevail against the Church of Christ, nor the Faith lost from



from the Earth, had lain in the Gospel unobserved ; we should have had no occasion for recourse to it, no means of tryal whether we put our trust in it ; had the Truth been never opposed, never corrupted, we had wanted one notable reason to praise God, that while the Offences are so rife in this World, this Church gives no Offence in matter of Doctrine, or in matter of Worship ; and that God may count us worthy to enjoy so inestimable a Blessing, let us pray that we may give no Offence by our Examples ; let us adorn our Profession by our Conversations ; and shew the Purity of our Faith by the Purity of our Actions. Thus much for the necessity of Offences that thus would arise. *It must needs be that Offences come.*

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## The Third Sermon.

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MATTH. XVIII. VII.

*Wo unto the World because of Offences ; for  
it must needs be that Offences come ;  
But wo to that man by whom the Of-  
fence cometh.*

**I** Come now to the Second Point, *viz.*  
That Offences would do great mis-  
chief in the World. *Wo unto the World  
because of Offences.* In speaking to which  
I shall consider,

I. What Mischief is done by Offences ?

II. Whence it comes that they are of  
so pernicious a Consequence ?

I. What Mischief is done by them ?  
And in this Question I need not be large,  
because the Answer to it has in some part  
been already given under those several  
Heads of Scandal which I mentioned be-  
fore ; it being impossible to shew where  
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the Scandal of any Practice or Opinion lies, without touching upon the Mischief it is apt to do. But to what has been said, something may be added.

1. The general Mischief of Offences or Scandals, is this: That they are a prevailing Temptation upon many in the World, to forsake the Way of Truth and Piety. For as good Examples and Encouragements, good Counsels and Instructions are proper means of making others better; so ill Examples, and the Arts of Seducing must needs have a contrary influence. God has put us into a kind of dependance upon one another, and has thereby given us Opportunities of the greatest Charity, and the best kinds of doing good, *viz.* of leading and confirming one another in the way of Truth and Vertue. But there is no help for it; but the Society we have with one another, may be abused into a means of doing one another mischief. And therefore as where Truth is sincerely represented, where Vertue is encouraged, where Authority protects them, where Wit and Learning are engaged to recommend them, there abundance of good will be done upon those who are framed to learn, and not to teach; to follow, but not to lead the way: So on the other hand,

hand, it is not to be expected, but the abuse of all those Advantages will create Prejudices against Truth and Goodness, and mislead multitudes. And this is too evident from the Experience of the World in all Ages. No Opinions, how foolish and absurd soever, how pernicious soever to the common Interest of Mankind, if they have been set off with plausible Colours, or supported by Authority, or have been accommodated to the Interests of wicked Men; but they have had Abettors and Followers, and have very often taken such deep Root in the Affections of Men, that 'tis one of the hardest things in the World to convert them into the way of Truth. But more particularly in the Second place.

2. The scandal of advancing Doctrines that give liberty to the Lusts of Men, and ease to their Minds without effectual Reformation. This Scandal, I say, has this pernicious effect, that for the most part it sears the Consciences of Men, and hardens their Hearts against all Reproof. Altho' it be a terrible aggravation of Sin, for a Man to venture upon the doing of that which his Conscience pulls him back from, and for which he knows he must give a sad account at the Last Day, if it be not pre-

prevented by Sorrow and Reformation ; yet such a Man is in a better condition than one that is well satisfied with himself, and believes his Condition to be good enough, while he goes on in his Sins without Reformation, because he has another way to escape the Damnation of Hell. For so long as a Man believes the Promises and Threatnings of the Gospel as they are, and knows the Terms upon which they are made, it may be hoped that he will at length lay these things seriously to Heart ; and that some awakening Reproof from Men, or some merciful Providence of God may make the Truth which he is already provided with the belief of, effectual to his Conversion. But there is little Reason to hope this of a Man whose very Principles are corrupted, and has no fears within himself for a charitable Man to take hold upon. And therefore that saying of our Saviour may be well applied to such a Person : *If the light that is in him be darkneß, how great is that darkneß ?* Moreover, as there is little hope to reform that Man's evil Practises, whose Persuasions make him secure and easie all the while. So there is no little difficulty to be met with, in trying to undeceive him ; for Men will hold comfortable Errors as long

as they can find the least pretence for it. And which is not the least mischief of this Offence, though such Errours are not laid down without a great trouble, yet they are taken up with much readines; they are apt to spread far and wide: And to this I believe the experience of the World agrees, *viz.* That although there are mistakes that lead to trouble of Mind and over-much restraint, yet for one that is led away by such mistakes, an hundred there are that believe comfortable Lies, which either wholly take off the restraints of Religion, or in such part, as to render them ineffectual.

3. Perverse Disputes; and an obstinate Maintenance of Errour by all the Arts of Sophistry, has this lamentable evil commonly attending it, that it renders many Persons utterly careless to examine on which side the Truth lies. Perhaps they are but few in comparison that are framed to an inquisitive Spirit; and they who are not so framed by Nature, or by Education, must force their Tempers to Patience, and take pains with themselves, which is an Employment that Men soon grow weary of; and commonly they break off, pretending it is to no purpose to search any farther; but that when  
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there is so much to be said on both sides, when there is such an appearance of Reason for and against the same thing, it is time for them to give over being Judges for themselves. And indeed in things that are either really disputable, or of less moment, this were not much to be blamed. But in matters of high Consequence, and Questions that touch the very Vitals of Religion, it often happens that Men grow weary of searching Truth, and give up themselves wholly to be led by the Authority and Judgment of others after the Controversie is stiffly maintain'd for some time on both sides. And it were well in this case, if it were an even lay whether they choose the true Guide or not. But when a Guide is to be chosen, and followed with an implicate Faith, the false Guide hath this Advantage always, that he exceeds in Confidence, in lofty Pretences, in swelling Titles, in positive denouncing Damnation to all that are not of his way; and though a Modest Man that speaks justly of things, and claims not to be infallible, deserves the most Credit; yet 'tis great odds that the other has most followers amongst those that understand not the merits of the Cause.

4. The same Cause has too often a yet worse Effect, and that is to run some Persons into Infidelity, and an utter neglect of Religion, as if no certainty could be had of the Principles of Religion, seeing there is so much Controversie about it. And some have said, that it will be then time enough for them to believe in God, and to worship him, when they that pretend to oblige them to it are agreed about it. The truth is, were it not for that secret impression of his own Being which God hath left upon our Nature, it is not improbable but the monstrous Errours that have been obtruded upon a great part of Mankind under the name of Faith, and the force and the fraud wherewith they have been maintained, and let in Atheism like a Deluge upon the World; especially considering that there are those in the World, who are so full of Zeal for their own way, that they have no tenderness for the common Principles of Faith, but are rather content that all should sink together, than that their own Doctrines should not stand. We have been born in hand that no assurance can be had of the truth of Christianity, but from the Authority of such and such Men; and they that believe upon other Grounds had as

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good have no Faith at all. That if it were possible for them to propound any thing that is false, we cannot be certain of any one Article that is true. That the same exceptions may be made to the Miracles of Christ and his Apostles that are made against the stories of latter Miracles; and finally, that by the same Reason that any of their Traditions are rejected the Holy Scriptures may be rejected too? and indeed we have lived to see the utmost that can be done by Wit and Learning to diminish the Authority of the Bible. Now this, I say, is a most dreadful Offence, and has done infinite mischief in the World, that Men who are violently engaged in a wrong way of Religion, care not for the most part what they venture in the service of their own Cause; for whilst they lay the same stress upon false, or at least disputable Points, that they do upon the most necessary and acknowledged Principles of Religion, and bend all their Wit to shew that no difference ought to be made, they give occasion to Men that would fain be Atheists, to deceive themselves into what they would be. For a very little consideration will serve to satisfy them, that something is false which is propounded to them as an Object of their Faith.

Faith and they know they have then leave given them to conclude that nothing is true.

5. There is another great mischief of Offences that are given by Errours in Doctrine or Practice, and a mischief that often happens in the World ; which is that of running into a contrary extream. The Church found this by sad experience in the fourth and fifth Ages, when Men of no small note disputing against one Heresie, fell into another of an opposite Nature, to the no small trouble of Christendom. Truth sometimes as well as Vertue lies in the mean ; and they that transgress on any one side, do not only this mischief to give what Authority they can to the wrong side they are of, but they do this mischief too of giving occasion to others to offend on the other extream. Thus the abuse of Church-Authority on the one side, has bred in some Men contempt of all such Authority on the other. The scandals that have been given by propagating Opinions by Force and Violence, have produced in many a fond perswasion that there ought to be no restraints whatsoever in matters of Religion. Superiours have required unlawful things in Divine Service ; and to be revenged upon that

abuse, it has been said, that they are not to be obeyed in matters of Prudence and Expedience. Religion has been made to run out into Shews and Ceremonies, and this has begotten prejudices against all appearance of Beauty and Reverence in the external Worship of God. And on the other side, the excesses of Men in departing from one extream, are scandalous to those whom they left, and do confirm them in their Errours. Thus because there are some who abuse the Liberty this Church gives to all of using the Holy Scriptures, and who reject the assistance of their Guides; they that are concerned the People should know as little of the Bible as is possible, argue from the Folly and Vanity of the former, how dangerous an Instrument it is in the hands of the Laity. And because 'tis impossible but that a Judgment of Discretion in matters of Religion being allowed to all, must be liable to be abused; they that abuse it to the making of Sects and Parties, and the bringing in of Innovations, give a Candle to that Church to glory in her Dissention, which provides that all should believe as she believes, because of her Authority; and that no Man judges of the particulars of his Faith, for himself.

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The truth is, the instances of this mischief are so many, and so undeniable, that whenever any great Scandal is given by Communities or Churches that consists in one extream; a Man may, without the Spirit of Prophecy, foretel that if the great Mercy of God prevent it not, it will in time beget the other extream. It is the great unhappiness of Mankind, that opposite Errors, which look as if one would destroy the other, do really strive to support one another. And yet there is hardly any foolish Advice more frequent, than to run from an extream as far as is possible, as if that were the way to make an end of it. But by this means woful Mischiefs have happened in the World; Divisions have been multiplied, Uncharitableness increased; and Men more and more hardened in their ways of Errour and Sin.

6. The Scandal of mixing absurd and impious Doctrines with the Truth, and unjustifiable Practices with such as are to be commended, has this notorious mischief still attending it, that it hinders the Conversion of Infidels, and is a terrible obstruction to the Propagating of Christianity. *Averroes* did not speak his

own sense alone, when he said, *Since the Christians eat their God, let my Soul be with the Philosophers.* The Scandals that are given to *Jews* and *Turks* I need not name, but to make an end of this unpleasing Argument.

7. *And lastly*, The mischief of these and all other Offences, is so much the greater, because when once Offence is given, no Man can tell where the mischief will end. For instance, suppose by my example I animate another to sin in like manner; or that I do not only corrupt his Manners, but his Principles too, and so do him all the hurt I can. Who can say that this is all the mischief I have done? Is it not likely that he will infect others, as I have infected him? and that they may go on to propagate the mischief which had its beginning from me? and that the next Age may be the worse for me? And that my Guilt may be growing Ages after I am dead? Apply this to all the Offences that are given in the World, and consider not only the greatness of the mischief they do, but the spreading Nature of it, and we shall find great reason in those sad words of our Lord; *Wo to the world because of offences.* But, 2. Whence comes it that Offences are taken, and so all this mischief done by them? In

In general it might be sufficient to answer, That for whatever Causes some Men are apt to give Offence, for the same others are apt to take it ; and therefore it would not be impertinent to call over in this place, the unsuitableness of the Gospel to the Lusts, and to the Vanity of Mankind, whether it be considered as a Rule of Faith, or Manners, or Worship. But to this it may be added,

1. That there are a great many in the World, who for want of either good natural Abilities, or good Education, have little ability to judge for themselves ; and therefore the most part take their Impressions from the Authority of other Mens Examples, or Instructions. And therefore when they fall into ill hands, they fare accordingly ; to which our Saviour seemed to have a particular regard in the Verse before the Text : *Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him, that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.* So that because there would be some Persons sincerely disposed, who in many things could not judge for themselves, but must be led by Authority, our Saviour, for their greater security, provided this frightful

ful Threatning, to deter all Men from taking the advantage of their weakness to mislead them.

2. Some stumble at Offences laid before them, and take up pernicious Doctrines, meerly from impatience of considering, and taking time to lay things together. He that judges rashly and hastily, may by chance make a true Judgment, but he shall as often judge falsely; it being no difficult thing, as I observed last time, to lay such colours upon Error, as will require some leisure to see through them. And in such cases if a Man be unwilling to take pains, and desires to come presently and easily to the Conclusion, he gives the Seducer all the Advantage he could desire, and is indeed just the Person he desired to meet with; one easily deceived by a false appearance of Reason.

3. The strange influence which the carnal Affections of Men, and their worldly Interests have upon their Judgments, is a fatal cause of laying them open to the mischief of Scandals. We are too apt to desire Doctrines and Examples in favour of liberty to sin; and therefore when they are offered, we are not so apt as we should be, to guard our selves against them. Thus it was among the *Jews*, as  
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### *The Third Sermon.*

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God said by *Jeremy*, Jer. 5. 31. *The Prophets prophesie falsely, and my people love to have it so.*

To these I might add other Causes, viz. The prejudice of Education, undue admiration of Mens Persons, prejudice against Truth, arising from prejudice against Persons, an Inclination to Opinions suitable to our own Temper and Complexion; love of Novelty on the one side, and on the other hatred to change, though it be for the better; all which Dispositions and Circumstances expose those that are under them to the mischief of Offences. But I should be over-tedious to run into all the particulars under this Head, which may also be more profitably supplied by Directions in the close of all.

And so I come to the third intention, which was to reduce what has been said to matter of Exhortation. And I shall leave with you these two necessary Cautions.

I. Be careful to give no Offence.

II. Be careful to take none.

1. Be careful to give no Offence; i. e. to lay no stumbling-block in any Man's way to lead him into Sin or Errour, or to confirm him in it. Remember the words



words of our Lord Jesus, *Wo be to that man by whom the Offence cometh.* Now, the way to keep our selves free from this guilt, is to love the Truth our selves, sincerely to desire it, diligently to pursue it; and likewise in all our Actions to live by Rule, and then we shall be sure to avoid giving ill Examples. And we are the more obliged to this, because we are not only to give an account of our selves to God, but of our selves also with reference to the good or ill that others have received by us. Let us consider, my Brethren, how careful we should be of our own Actions, and those especially that lye open to others; when if we do ill our selves, we shall not only be to answer for our own transgression of God's Law, but very likely for the sins of others, who are either led into some unlawful Practice, or confirmed in it by our Examples. Which makes such an encrease of Guilt, and is so great a sin in it self, that it is sometimes needful for a Man to abate of the use of his own Liberty in things not unlawful of themselves, lest another that is likely enough to make a wrong construction of it, and to encourage himself in manifest sin, should indeed do so. And for this reason St. Paul, handling the Question of eating things offered

fered to Idols, acknowledgeth, That *meat commendeth us not unto God; for neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse.* But, says he, take heed lest by any means this Liberty of yours become a *stumbling-block* to them that are weak, who are thoroughly confirmed in the Worship of one God according to the Gospel. For, as he goes on, if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the Idols Temple, shall not the Conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to Idols? i. e. be emboldened to commit Idolatry, 1 Cor. 8. So that although it was not in it self unlawful to be present at those Sacrifices, yet the Example being scandalous, St. Paul concludes it to be a *sin against the Brethren*, and *against Christ*, ver. 12. And this in as much as it would grieve their weak Conscience; i. e. not (as we use, I doubt, to understand that word grieve) that it would trouble and displease them, but really hurt them, by making them bold to partake of the Idolatrous Sacrifice. And now, Brethren, if in things that are perhaps in their own Nature lawful, we ought to use caution, lest by an uncharitable use of our Liberty we encourage others to do things that are in

in themselves absolutely unlawful: How much more cautious should we be not to give any Authority to sin, by an Example that is evil in it self? So likewise we ought with the more care to chuse our perswasions in Religion, because in all likelihood we do not chuse them for our selves only, but for our Children, for our Servants, for some of our Neighbours, for many that some way or other depend upon us, and for whom we must answer at the day of Judgment. And since we cannot profess, we cannot live, but the World observes us; so how instructing ought to be our Profession, how instructing our Conversation; How apt to promote Innocence, Truth, Vertue, and Piety? And this the more, the more we are in the Eye of others? In short, no words I can use, can make such an impression upon you, as these words of our Saviour ought to make. *Wo be to him by whom the Offence cometh.* But this is not all.

2. We must also be careful not to take Offences, not to be led into Sin and Errour by Example or Allurements by any kind of Temptations whatsoever: To justify which Exhortation, I desire you to observe these three things.

I. That

1. That our blessed Lord hath foretold that Offences would come ; nay, that *it must needs be that they come* : Nay I have shewn, that the most dangerous Offences are particularly foretold in the New Testament. Now, Brethren, this very warning, in general, much more those particular warnings, were designed to take away, in some good measure, the danger of those scandals, by Arming us with caution against them before hand. Since that is to be applied to all other particular Scandals, that is expressly added to the Prediction of *lying Wonders*, *Behold, I have told you before*. Now, if the Offences, though very dangerous of themselves, were lessened by being fore-told, our guilt in falling by such Offences must be so much the greater, because being fore-warned we would yet take no warning. The Offensiveness of these Offences is in some part abated by the cautions of the Scripture, in as much as we have no cause to be startled and amazed, and to question the care of Gods Providence over his Church, because Offences come, since the Author of our Faith has told us before-hand, that they must needs come. And,

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2. We are also fore-warned of the guilt and misery of falling by Offences; in as much as our Saviour hath said, *Wo to the World because of Offences; i. e.* as I told you at first, because of that evil which will happen by taking Offence. But if Men were free from guilt in the committing of those sins which they fall into by reason of Scandals that are laid in their way. In short, if taking Offence were not it self a sin, and in many cases a very great sin, and such a sin as we shall be sadly accountable for at the day of Judgment, there could be no Reason given, why our Saviour should denounce a *Wo* upon this account; *Wo unto the World because of Offences.*

3. Let us not forget what was observed last time, that God permits Offences to come; which, according to the common course of things, were in themselves most likely to come; he permits them, I say, for the Tryal of our Ingenuity, our Honesty and Sincerity. *There must be Heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest.* It is by no means unavoidable to stumble at Scandals, because we are fore-warned of them; but if we take warning, it is for the Praise and Reward of our Diligence and Faithfulness in

in keeping to God's Word. Our Saviour speaking of the Signs and Wonders done by false Christs, and false Prophets, says, *That if it were possible they should deceive the very Elect*; that is, they would deceive the very best Men, but that they are guarded by Sincerity, and by the Grace of God; and these words plainly intimate, that this would be the Touch-stone to distinguish Persons truly and solidly good, from all others, that notwithstanding the fair colours that would be put upon wicked Practices and Errors, they would persevere in the ways of Truth and Godliness.

And now that we may not be misled by Offences, but keep our selves unspotted from this present World, and escape the Corruptions that are in the World through Lust, let us take these few following Rules along with us.

1 Let that which is on all sides acknowledged to be the Word of God, be of more power and force with us, than all Humane Authorities whatsoever; which Rule, as it is most reasonable, so it is a safe Rule upon this account, that if it be followed, it will secure us from the greatest Offences, as those Opinions and Practices are, which are evidently contrary to God's Word.

2. Let

*The Third Sermon.*

2. Let us keep close to the Ancient Creeds, which our Church faithfully delivers ; for no Man has yet been so bold as to offer the least doubt against that ; nay, all that we are challenged for, is, that we do not receive those additions to the Creed, which in comparifon were but of Yesterday. These Ancient Forms of confessing the Faith, shew what Articles of meer Belief were thought by the Primitive Church necessary to be known and held by all : And because the Faith was at once delivered to the Saints, no more can be necessary now then was then. Now, if we observe that the Profession of this Faith is sufficient to make a Christian, or a Member of the Church ; we shall be the better guarded against all erroneous Doctrines which are propounded to us by any Party, under the notion of necessary Truths. For whilst we are sure we profess all that was thought necessary at first, we shall be at ease, and feel no disturbance in examining what is moreover propounded, and determining to receive it, if it has Authority from the Scriptures, and to reject it, if it has none ; much more if it be contrary thereunto. Which Rule, I hope, you perceive, is to take place in judging what you are to believe, not in judging what

whatsoever is to be done ; for even in the Worship of God there are several things of an indifferent Nature, for which there is no particular Precept in the Scripture, and in which we may be, and ought to be concluded by the Custom of our Church and the Will of our Superiours. And he cannot miscarry greatly, but is in great measure secured from the mischief of Offences, who in matters of Faith will be determined by nothing less than Divine Authority ; and who in matters of external Order, which are no way determined by the Authority of the Scriptures, is still ready to be concluded by the Authority of Man. But then,

3. Let us keep our selves always in the proper disposition and preparation to judge and conclude aright for our selves (*i. e.*) by Sincerity, which consists chiefly in a vehement desire to understand the Truth, and to do our Duty : We must lay our Hands upon this, that we will be honest and good, and then we shall use all good Rules well ; to be sure we shall not be a whit the more enclined to embrace Doctrines for our Belief or Practice, because they make for our worldly and carnal Interests. And this goes a great way to enable Men to distinguish between

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Truth and Error, Good and Evil. Offences from without would not stumble us, if we were not weakned and blinded by the Offence of a vitious Disposition within our selves. And therefore our Saviour having given warning against the former in the words of the Text, doth in the very next words proceed to direct us how to secure our selves against them, and that by preventing the latter; *Wherefore* (says he) *if thy right hand or foot offend thee, cut them off: And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee.* That is, subdue thy dearest Lusts, and if there be any one that is harder to part with than the rest, and is grown a part of thy self, though it cost thee as much pain to divide thy self from it, as it would to *cut off thine hand, or pull out thine eye*; for that very reason do thou mortifie it in the first place: For when the World will be full of Offences, (*i. e.*) Encouragements to Sin, and of deceitful Errors, if thou also art an Offence to thy self, for want of a sincere and *honest Heart*, and purifying thy Mind from worldly and carnal Lusts, thou wilt not be able to withstand the Arts and Force of outward Temptations. Now the way to gain this Honest Mind, is to fix our thoughts steadfastly upon the Life to come, which

which is the means our Saviour directs to the use of in this place too: *And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, for it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than to be cast into Hell-fire.*

*Lastly,* Let all our other care be begun, continued, and ended in earnest Prayer to God, that he would *enlighten the eyes of our minds*, and purifie our intentions, and lead us in the right way, and keep us in it by his Grace; *For the effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous man availeth much* for another, but much more for himself, and most of all, when he asketh the best Things, when he asketh those things that please God best; a Mind purified from worldly Lusts, and an Understanding enlightened with the knowledge of the Truth: *He that doth these things, shall never fall.*



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## The Fourth Sermon.

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MATTH. XXVI. 41.

*Watch and Pray, that ye enter not into Temptation : The Spirit indeed is willing, but the Flesh is weak.*

**I**N these words are contained an Exhortation to *watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*, and a Reason upon which the Exhortation is made, *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*

In the Exhortation we may observe a Direction to the use of means, *watch and pray*; and then the end, why we should do so, *That we enter not into Temptation.*

As to the means, *watching and praying*, the use of them both supposes a great concern for the event : For if I am not

only to be careful my self, but to get all the help I can ; nay, if I am to go to the God of Heaven and Earth for his help, and to seek it constantly, to be sure as the end I aim at ought not to be in it self trivial, so neither ought I to be trially affected with it : A great concern for the end is supposed in the use of such means, as Watchfulness and Prayer. But more particularly, as to watching ; That signifies such a care of our selves as supposes danger, and that was the case of the Disciples, to whom the Exhortation was immediately given : Our Saviour was now preparing them for his approaching Passion, he would therefore have them consider before-hand what a terrible Temptation it would be, to see their own Master forsaken, and contemned, and almost every body ashamed, or afraid to own him ; he would have them reflect upon their own Infirmities, and examine their own Hearts ; and to consider whether they were likely to hold out against such a Temptation as was coming upon them. He would have them furnish their minds with all the Powers of Faith, with all the Reasons of Constancy, which they might infer from the Holy Doctrine he had taught them ; they were now to con-

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sider the value of their Souls, the vanity of the World, the promise of Everlasting Life, and what-ever they had learnt from Jesus, which was proper to confirm them in that good mind they were in at present; he would have them to resolve well, and to fix their Resolution not upon a sudden heat only, not merely upon the general disposition of an Honest Mind, but upon a deliberate Judgment, what they must lose, and what they should get by doing as became them. Finally, he would have them to maintain a constant sence of these things upon their minds, that they might not be at a loss, and be found unprovided on the sudden. All this is implied in *watching*, a Work which the Disciples were bidden more strictly to attend, because the Lord had told them, that the hour was at hand, when a terrible Tryal would befall them, and therefore upon their neglect to do accordingly, he justly upbraided them afterward, *What, could ye not watch with me one hour?* And all this was to be drawn into consequence, for the Instruction of all his Disciples to the end of the World, not only upon extraordinary Occasions, but in the ordinary course of their Lives; that is, that we should be pos-

essed with a sense of God and our Duty, of the danger we are in by the Temptations of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil; of the fearful consequence of yielding to these Temptations; and that we should maintain a lively sense of these things upon our Minds by being conversant in the Word of God, and by making the main Principles of Religion present to our Minds by a frequent consideration of them. This I say, is incumbent upon us all, since our Saviour thought it needful for all; for, says he, *What I say unto you, I say to all, Watch*, Mark 13. 37.

But to Watchfulness our Lord Commands us to add Prayer: *Watch and Pray*.

And Prayer implies these two things.

1. A just sense of our own insufficiency, that if God be absent from us, our Purposes are uncertain, our Resolutions wavering and inconstant, and our Wills and Affections alterable by every blast of Temptation, though we may be provided with very good Reasons of Constancy in doing well: God hath not left us merely to depend upon the strength of Arguments and Motives, though they are necessary, but hath promised moreover, the supernatural help of his Grace; and we are

are not to depend meerly upon the former, but knowing that we need farther assistance, we should daily apply our selves to him by Prayer for it.

2. It implies not only a consciousness of our inability to do the thing that God requires, but moreover a steady belief of, and trust in the Grace of God which he hath promised, that it is sufficient for us, and that he *will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him*; that he who is good to all, will be ready to help them, especially *that call upon him in sincerity, and will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able*. Such is the meaning of that part of the Exhortation, which concerns the means, *Watch and Pray*. Now,

2. The end of Watchfulness and Prayer is, *That we may not enter into Temptation*. The meaning of which Phrase is plainly this, that we may not fall by Temptation; not, as the words at first hearing seem to import that no Temptation may befall us; for as to that Temptation, which required the Vigilance and Devotion of our Lord's Disciples at this time, he plainly told them, it would happen, and therefore by *entring into Temptation*, must be meant falling into that sin, to which the Temptation is an inducement; and so the Exhortation



Exhortation runs, as if our Saviour had said, You are very confident, that you shall do as you ought, as if it were one of the easiest things in the World; but I tell you before-hand, that this Confidence of yours is a dangerous Presumption, and you will find your selves deceived, when it comes to the Trial, if you take no more care than you are now disposed to take. I Advise you therefore to consider what will happen, better than you have done, and to call together all those Instructions you have heard from me, and make them present to your minds, and be so affected with them, as to betake your selves to Prayer, that being thus armed not with an hasty, but a prudent Resolution, and with dependence upon God, you may overcome the Temptation when it happens. This seems to be the Natural meaning of the Exhortation, *Watch and Pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*

I proceed next to explain the Reason which our Saviour adds to enforce the Exhortation: *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* And now I doubt, when we hear or read these words, we are too apt to interpret them, as if Jesus had meant to excuse the sluggishness of his Disciples, and had indeed spoken to them  
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in this manner : " It were well if you  
" would Watch and Pray, that you may  
" not fall by Temptation ; but the truth  
" is, though you are willing so to do, yet  
" you are not very much to be blamed,  
" but in some part to be excused, if you  
" do not, and that because of the frailty  
" and weakness of Humane Nature. But  
I beseech you not to be fond of this way  
of expounding these words, for it is by no  
means true, nor in the least worthy of our  
Saviour's Wisdom, nor agreeable to the  
Scope of his Doctrine : Let us not think  
so meanly of our Lord, as if he gave his  
Disciples necessary Directions, and in the  
same breath excused them, whether they  
fulfilled his Directions or not. These words,  
I say, do not contain an excuse of their  
neglect to Watch and Pray, but a Reason  
why they should do both, and such a Reason  
too as left them without all Excuse, if  
they failed in either : For thus they may  
be supposed to run : " Watch and Pray,  
" that ye enter not into Temptation, for  
" though the Spirit is willing, yet the  
" Flesh is weak, and so it is absolutely ne-  
" cessary that ye Watch and Pray. Which  
Interpretation, as it holds forth a worthy  
and excellent meaning of it self, so it is  
clearly warranted by the circumstances  
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and scope of the place, and by the condition of those Persons at present, to whom these words were used, and by what befel them afterwards. And this will be very evident, if we examine the meaning of the words by these Rules : For then you will see,

1. That by a *willing Spirit*, we are not to understand a forwardness to Watch and Pray, but a present Resolution to overcome Temptations, and that a sincere Resolution too ; such a Resolution as is accompanied with a strong persuasion, that we shall do so ; and that was the case of the Disciples : For if we look back in this Chapter, we shall find, that upon their Master's fore-warning them what occasion of Offence they would meet with that very Night, *St. Peter* briskly steps forward in the Name of all the rest of the Apostles, all agreeing to what he said, *v. 23. Though all men (says he) shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.* Thus the *willingness* of the *Spirit* shewed it self ; that is, a forwardness to do all that became him in the hardest Circumstances. But our Saviour, willing to prove him farther, answered, *v. 34. Verily I say unto thee, that this night before the Cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice ;* which  
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was so far from taking down, that it rather raised his assurance, for he replied, *v. 35. Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee : Likewise also said all the Disciples.* There the Spirit shewed it self willing again, and, which is to be observed, they were all at this time heartily disposed to do as they said ; all, but the Traytor Judas ; for which reason about this time, Jesus acknowledged, that they were all sincere and honest Persons, excepting Judas only, *John 13. 10, 11. Ye are clean, but not all ; For he knew who should betray him, therefore said he, Ye are not all clean, i.e.* Ye are not all honest Men, but ye are all so but one ; all but one mean as you say, and intend to be as good as your word, and do believe that you shall. So that if we explain these words, *The Spirit indeed is willing*, by the condition of the Persons to whom they were spoken, and by their present disposition and persuasion, as we ought to do ; the meaning is plainly this, as if our Saviour had said, “ I know ye are Men of sincere and honest Dispositions, and do intend very well, and say no more than what you resolve to make good by performance, and I see that you believe you shall be as good as your word. Now therefore,

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2. By *the weakness of the Flesh* we are plainly led to understand those Imperfections and Passions, which honest Men are not wholly free from, and which will make Temptations dangerous even to the sincerest Persons, especially if they trust to a present good disposition of Mind, and think that they are not in danger, because they are now well resolved. The Apostles, when our Lord told them before-hand of the Temptation that would happen, were conscious to themselves of their own sincerity, and were so strongly possessed with an assurance of it, that being Men hitherto but of little Experience, they did not apprehend, or so much feel their own weakness, because the Temptation, which would make them feel it was not present; but their Master was aware of those Imperfections and Passions in them, which now indeed gave them no disturbance, but within a little time would do so; that is, when the Temptation should be present upon them: They did not consider how the Passion of Fear would work, when it was once plain, that it would be the most dangerous thing in the World to own their Master; they were not sufficiently sensible of the uncertainty of Human Resolutions, under strong induc-

inducements to Inconstancy, and how very possible it is even for sincere Men to be staggered, nay, and to be overcome by Temptations, which they think themselves sufficiently guarded against by their Integrity. But our Saviour knew all this, and therefore told them of it before hand, and used the consideration of the *weakness of the Flesh*, as an Argument to perswade them to *Watch* and to *Pray*, and not to trust meerly to a willing mind, or a sincere disposition; he produces this Argument I say, to make them abate of their confidence, and use more diligence, that they might be prepared by their own care, and by the Grace of God to answer the occasion that was at hand.

But to confirm this plain Interpretation, As the *willingness of the Spirit*, or the sincerity of these Men expressed it self in their forward undertaking and promising to do as they ought, so the *weakness of the Flesh* discovered it self in their failing to perform what they promised, whereby they made good the Prediction of our Saviour, that they would be *all offended because of him that night*. And what was the Reason, why the Flesh prevailed against the Spirit? Why did these honest Undertakers fail of performance? Even because

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because they did not follow their Master's Advice, they did not Watch and Pray; for had they used this means, they had not failed of the end, since Jesus himself directed them to use this Method and therefore we may be sure it would have been sufficient. Wherefore you may well conclude, that these words, *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*, were not intended here for an excuse of their not watching and praying, but as a reason why they ought to do so, and consequently as an aggravation of their fault in not doing it; for since there was so much need of Vigilance and Devotion, they were the more to blame, that they neglected it.

And thus I have given you, as I am perswaded, the natural and genuine sense of this place.

Now there are Two Points of Instruction which I shall from hence commend to your serious thoughts.

1. That we look well to it, that we be sincere and honest, and have that willing Spirit, which our Saviour acknowledged and commended to his Apostles.

2. That we do not altogether trust to our present sincerity and best purposes, but because of the weakness of the Flesh

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that we watch and pray, and thereby guard our selves against all Temptations.

1. That we be very well assured of our own sincerity, and the honesty of our purposes, which for the present any Man may be easily assured of, if he be sincere; that is, if he be honestly resolved to do his Duty under all circumstances of Temptation; for what can a Man ever arrive to an assurance of, if not of his own present intentions? Now the Argument whereby I am to perswade you to look well to this matter, is of very great force, and it is so plainly offered by the circumstances of this Resolution, that there is no avoiding it; and it is this. That if we are for the present sincerely and honestly disposed, we have some Title to the special Grace and Favour of God; whereas Hypocrites and Insincere Persons have none at all: For this was that, for which our Saviour valued his Disciples, that they had a *willing Spirit*; and as I shall shew more particularly by and by, that was the reason why he watched over them, why he continually instructed them, why he explained things to them, why he took care to rectifie their mistakes, and to correct their faults, and to give them all

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the ways of improvement, because they were honest Men; and ever intended to behave themselves like honest Men: They were all but *Judas* Men of great plainness and simplicity; teachable and willing to be enformed of the Truth, open and free in their behaviour, not addicted to any notorious Vice, of a Religious temper and disposition, and every way fit to be trained up to the perfection of Vertue in the School of Christ; and therefore our Saviour took a particular care of them, and bore with all their Infirmitie, Mistakes, and Follies, till he had brought them to perfection. Whereas *Judas*, whom he excepted out of this Commendation, *Teare clean*, was a Man false and close, covetous and treacherous; and for the compassing of his ends, ready for any mischief; he was a Thief, and kept himself a follower of Jesus longer in all likelihood than he would have done otherwise; because he bore the Bag: He seemed to have become his Disciple at first for no other reason, but because he expected to have been some great Man in the World under Jesus, whose Miracles had convinced him that he was the Christ; but when by the constant tenor of Christ's Doctrine, and by his Example, he found  
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he was likely to be deceived in that expectation of worldly Greatness, he was resolved to make the best he could of his being one of our Lord's Disciples, and that by making use of the Opportunity he had, to get both Money and Favour from the Rulers by betraying him. This was the Character of *Judas*, whom our Lord knew full well before he betrayed him; and he being such a vicious Hypocrite, so great a Villain as he was, Jesus seemed not to regard him at all, nor to take any particular care of him, but did he let him go from one wickedness to another, till he came to utter Ruin; and for what reason should we think, but because he had nothing at all of a Spirit of Honesty in him, and was therefore incapable of being improved in any degree of Vertue.

This, I say, is the Argument, whereby I would recommend to all Men that simplicity and honesty of Spirit which was discernible in the rest of the Apostles, whilst though they were but very imperfect in Religion and Vertue, in comparison to what they were afterwards, yet our Saviour did not cast them off for every fault they were guilty of, for every mistake they were under, but rather was very tender of them, and took all Oppor-

tunities to set them right when they were wrong, and to lead them from one degree of Vertue and Goodness to another, till at length they became Teachers of Truth, and Examples of Piety to all the World. And this I believe verily is the meaning of those words of our Saviour that occur in the Sixth Chapter of St. John, and in other places, that Jesus would *cast away those that the Father had given him, (i. e.)* Men of honest Minds, and sincere Dispositions; these words alluding to what is commonly seen amongst us, of a Father's committing a Child of probity and a towardly Disposition, to a skillful Master, to be Educated and Improved by him, and his expecting a good account of him at last: And therefore said our Saviour, *John 17. 12. Of those thou hast given me, or committed to my care, I have lost none, but the Son of Perdition, (i. e.)* Judas had utterly fallen off, and miscarried, because he was a Man of a Reprobate disposition; but of those that God had committed to him, *(i. e.)* Men of teachable and willing Spirits, he had lost none, although they had a great many failings, and were often in very great danger.

But I am to make out this Point from the circumstances of the story in this Chapter

Chapter and elfewhere, which affords a remarkable instance of it in *St. Peter*, to wit, how great is the care of God over a sincere Man to save him from utter miscarrying, notwithstanding many blameable defects. And I the rather shall instance in *St. Peter*, because upon every notable Occasion of instructing the rest of his Disciples, our Saviour still addressed himself to *St. Peter*; not that the rest were unconcerned, but that he was most of all concerned, because he most of all needed his Instructions and Admonitions, as you will plainly see. 'Tis true, he had many notable good Qualities, wherein he excelled the rest; for in quickness of Apprehension, in boldness of Spirit, in concern for his Master, in Activity and Industry, in forward Undertaking, and in contempt of Danger, he seemed to out-do all his Brethren. But this forward, vigorous, and active Man made more falls, as far as we can find, than any other of the Apostles did; but being also sincere and honest, he was therefore more watched, and particularly instructed than the rest. And I cannot but observe this by the way, that the reason why our Saviour addressed himself in particular to *Peter*, so much oftner, than to the rest of the Apostles, was

not that he gave him a more singular Power and Authority than he did the rest, but because being a Man of a more forward and Active Spirit, than all the rest, in doing well, he commonly did better; in doing ill, he mostly did worse than the rest, which is a sufficient account of that particular application of our Saviour to him, either in commending or reprov- ing him. And thus when *Peter's* forwardness of Spirit led him to speak well, before any of his Brethren were ready, as when he confessed that Jesus was *the Son of the living God*, that being what they all assented to, Jesus in commending him, commended all, in encouraging him, he encouraged all; and though he alluded to his Name in particular, by saying, *Thou art Peter*, yet that which followed, *and upon this Rock will I build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it*, was equally a commendation and encouragement of the Faith of the rest, and of their professing that Faith, upon which the Church was to be founded so surely, that it should never be destroyed. So likewise when he rebuked his Master, for fore-telling what he must suffer, and had that severe Reprimand from him, *Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that*

be of God, &c. Neither was this spoken so particularly to him, as not to extend to the rest; it was said also for their Reproof and Instruction, who were as unwilling as *Peter*, that Jesus should die an ignominious Death; and as ignorant as he, what wise and good ends Divine Providence would bring about by it.

Wherefore I mention *Peter* rather than any one of the rest of the Disciples, as an Instance, how a *good and honest Heart*, a sincere Mind, or (as it is called in the Text) a *willing Spirit*; how this, I say, puts a Man under the special Care and Protection of Divine Grace, because this very Admonition of the Text, though intended to all, was particularly directed to *Peter*; and it is very remarkable how our Saviour, like a watchful and Prudent Guide, took all Opportunities to set him right. For,

1. It is plain that *Peter* was one who presumed more than enough upon the strength of his own Resolutions: He it was, that upon our Lord's foretelling the dangerous Temptation that was near, did with some confidence in himself make this boast, *Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended; and though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.* Which was no doubt

spoken also with a very honest intent and purpose, as it was by the rest of the Apostles, who followed his Example; he was no Hypocrite, or Villain in what he said, as Judas was, but meant all that he promised, and at that time verily believed, that he should be as good as his word, whilst Judas was at that Minute bent to betray him. But this honest Man wanted experience of himself, and presumed too fast upon his own Ability, and therefore our Lord took this Occasion to lay a Foundation in him, of a better understanding of himself, for he said unto him, *Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily I say unto thee, the Cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.* A seasonable intimation it was, that his Master in the very height of his confidence, should tell him, That he would thrice deny him, before the next day was well begun: And this forewarning, together with the experience of his own Infirmary afterward, no doubt served to make him ever after a more considerate and watchful Man, and tended to add modesty and humility to his other good qualities.

2. If we go a little farther, we find him sleeping with the rest of the Disciples, though our Lord had left them to pray that they might not enter into Temptation:

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And that when Jesus came and found them asleep, he said unto *Peter* who had undertaken so much before, *What could ye not watch with me one hour: watch and pray that ye enter not into Temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* By which words he gave him fully to understand, that he was not acquainted with his own Infirmities, and had not that sense of the necessity of watchfulness and prayer, which he ought to have had at that time.

3. It was but a little while after, that *Judas* conducted the Officers and Soldiers, that were sent by the High-Priest to take Jesus; and when they had laid hands on him, *Peter's* forward Spirit led him into another mistake: *He drew his sword and struck a Servant of the High-Priest, and smote off his ear:* which though well meant in zeal for his Master, was yet an undutiful resistance of Authority, and betrayed a rash anger. But neither did our Saviour leave him here without that admonition, which was necessary to make him wiser and better. Then said Jesus unto him, *Put up thy sword again into its place, for all they that take the sword, shall perish by the sword, thinkest thou, that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve Legions of Angels?*



*Angels? But how then will the Scripture be fulfilled, that thus it must be?*

4. That tryal of him, that followed immediately, almost, at the High-Priest's Hall, shewed him to be as yet a very imperfect Man, and one that wanted that resolution which he thought himself Master of. Indeed, he shewed a little more courage than the rest of his Brethren, inasmuch as they fled upon their Master's being apprehended, but he followed at a distance to observe the event; but this served only to intangle him in a more shameful fault than theirs, that ran clear away, even to the denying of his Lord thrice, and the last time with imprecations; he that had so forwardly confessed in the Name of the rest, that Jesus was *the Son of God*; he that but a few hours before had so vehemently declared, that he would rather die with his Master, than deny him, when now he saw him brought like a Criminal into the High-Priest's Hall, altered from what he was before, and his Faith began to fail. It is not improbable, that he had some hope his Master would deliver himself out of their hands by some Miracle because he *sat among the Servants, to see the end*: But yet the danger was so apparent, that he wanted courage to own him till the  
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end was come, and so denied him : And while he spake his last words of denyal , *the Cock crew : And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter*, Luke 22. 61. Not throwing off all farther care of him, notwithstanding so foul a miscarriage : *And Peter remembred the words of the Lord, how he had said to him, before the Cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice : And he went out, and wept bitterly.*

That which I have been driving at all this time, is to shew a notable example of the *weakness of the flesh*, in a Man very apt to be confident of himself, and withal, of the watchful care of our Saviour to correct him, and set him right, and that because he had a *willing spirit*, an honest and sincere disposition, void of Malice and Falshood, and was ever desirous to know the truth, and to do his duty. Therefore said our Saviour to him, just before his last conflict, *Luk. 22. 31, 32. Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.* For the Tempter understood Peter's composition, how much *chaff* was mingled with the *wheat*, and what were the inconveniences of his temper, and desired nothing more than full liberty to make use of them, for the

the overturning of all his good qualities ? But said Jesus, *I have prayed for thee, that thy Faith fail not ; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy Brethren :* (i. e.) when thou art satisfied what a great many things are to be mended in thy self, and that those infirmities of thine, which at present thou art not aware of, had like to have been thy utter ruin, but withal that thou hast escaped through the Grace of God when thou art grown wiser, and more established in all kind of goodness, then do thou strengthen thy Brethren, be careful of all sincere Persons that labour under Infirmities as I have been of thee, take care to improve that which is good in them, and to secure them all thou canst, against all their Infirmities.

Thus much concerning the great advantage of sincerity, that it doth entitle a Man to the special favour and protection of God ; and so what we are to learn by all, is to lay this Foundation of well-doing, which our Saviour acknowledged and commended in his Apostles ; that is, a willing mind, and an honest disposition ; for then we are in a condition to be watched over by the Divine Grace.

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But having shewn how valuable in the sight of God is a willing Spirit, and an honest Mind, I proceed in the

Second place, to urge our Saviour's exhortation and, and that is, notwithstanding this to *watch* and to *pray*, that we enter not into temptation; for though the spirit be willing, yet the flesh is weak: For if sincerity could of it self support a Man without any farther care and help, we had never heard of the drunkenness of *Noah* and *Lot*, the murder and adultery of *David*, and the fall of *Peter*; we had never met with any instances of the weakness of human Nature in Men very honestly disposed, whose examples shew us the necessity of watchfulness and prayer, the means we are directed by our Saviour to use; and if we do use these means, if we do set the advantage of care and prayer against the inconvenience of human frailty, we shall never fall. For it was not only for the instruction of *St. Peter*, that our Lord gave the exhortation of the Text, to *watch* and *pray*, but for the instruction of all the rest of the Apostles; and not for their instruction only, but it was for ours also in all Ages, that he left this direction with them. They were not always to expect that the special Grace of God would attend them,

them, and either keep them from great faults, or set them right again after their miscarryings, while they neglected to acquaint themselves with their own hearts, and to take care of their actions, and to seek the assistance of God's Spirit: And we much less, who have been longer under the guidance of God's Grace, than they had been, even from our Infancy, ever since we were Baptized, and taken into the Covenant of Grace, who have also had the instructions of their examples, and the use and benefit of our Lords admonitions to them, and have been guilty of more neglects and miscarryings, than they were, who moreover have been educated to a more perfect understanding of the Doctrine and Nature of Christianity, than as yet they had attained to; under these circumstances we are not to expect the watchful care of God's Spirit over us, to lead us out of temptation, and to *deliver us from evil*, if we do not watch our selves, and to watchfulness add prayer, *that we enter not into temptation*: We are not to trust to our general good purposes, and honest ways, but to remember the weakness of our flesh, (*i. e.*) the unsteadiness of our purposes, the mutability of our affections, the deceitfulness of our hearts,

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hearts, and therefore to supply all our defects with what diligence and circumspection we can, and in doing all this, to be very earnest in all our Prayers, that God would crown all with his Grace: This is the way to be *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.* And we are undoubtedly safe if we continually keep our selves under the wings of his Grace; and put our selves under his protection by watchfulness and prayer; *For the effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* It availeth much for another, much more for himself; it availeth much for the procuring of temporal blessings, much more for spiritual and eternal; God does not always Crown the industry of a Man in his labouring for the good things of this World, with desired success; and sometimes he sends them to the lazy, and bestows them upon those that never pray: But the most necessary things, a good mind, the best wisdom, the improvements of the Soul, he ever gives to the diligent, and to those that depend upon him by Prayer, and never otherwise: And this is a plain conviction, that if we are *barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of God*, if we make no progress in Vertue, nor move at all towards Perfection, it is our own

own fault, who have so ready a way to gain that help from God, which will not fail to better our Natures, and to strengthen us in every good work, and to deliver us from temptation. I have already told you, how vain a thing it is to plead frailty and Infirmary, for not watching and praying, since for that very reason our Saviour directs us to watchfulness and prayer, because altho' the spirit is willing, yet the flesh is weak: And it is to as little purpose to make the same plea for those miscarriages that are the effects of our infirmity, since there is this to make them the effects of wilfulness too, that we have neglected to consider our own weakness, and to go to God for help: And what should be more easie and natural, than for a frail Creature to have recourse to the Fountain of his being, and the Author of all good, the God of Power and Mercy, for a supply of his own defects? We are not therefore excuseable, if we do it not constantly and earnestly, when so much depends upon it.

I have but one Motive more to lay before you, but that methinks a very prevailing one; and that is, that our blessed Master himself, in whom there was no sin, nor sinful infirmity, he, I say, him-

self, who so little need any other strength but his own, practised that Advice which he gave to his Disciples, he watched and prayed when the hour of temptation was coming on, whilst his Disciples threw away their time, and we see the different effects of their different behaviour: Our Lord *witnessed a good Confession*, but his slothful Disciples fled away shamefully; and *Peter* the most forward of all a little before, miscarry'd the most shamefully of all, and deny'd his Master: A very instructing example to shew us, how much depends upon Prayer, and how unreasonable a thing it is to complain of the Infirmities of our Natures, and the difficulty of standing against temptations when we have so ready, but withal so necessary a means of relief, that Jesus himself made use of it. And surely one main reason why he did so, was that we might be instructed by his examples, how we ought to fortifie our selves against the temptations of the World: *He was tempted for us*, because we also were to be tempted, and he prayed under his temptation for our sakes too, that we might learn of him the way to overcome temptations, and to be always prepared against them. Let



us therefore (my Brethren) remember the words of our Lord Jesus, *watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation*: let us also remember the example of our Lord, who himself watched and prayed, though he of all Men that ever lived, least needed any assistance against temptation: Let us enter into the Church, and frequent the Publick Prayers, and let us enter into our Closets, and never omit our Prayers to God in secret: For by every such omission, we lose an opportunity for our Souls, we weaken our dependance upon God, we lie more open to danger from within and from without, and have made one step more backward, and are farther from the Grace of God.

In a word, let us purge our selves from all insincerity and hypocrisie, and be sure that we do not suffer the guilt of any wilful sin to lye upon us, and ever keep our selves from presumptuous sin; and to this general habit of honesty, let us add a jealousy over our selves, doing like those that depend upon the Grace and Providence of God; for if we continue thus doing we shall not fall, and that because *God is our help*

*help*, who is not wanting to prevent us by his Grace, and will therefore never fail to follow us with it, whilst we walk in his ways, and study to please him in all things, and humbly depend upon him for our Safety in this World, and our Salvation in the World to come.

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## The Fifth Sermon.

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MATTH. IV. 10.

*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

**H**ERE are Two Rules to be observed.

- I. *To worship and serve God.*
- II. *To worship and to serve him only.*

And these are Rules of both Testaments, and in Truth Laws of Nature, and therefore they that violate them *are without excuse.*

My design is, to lay before you some of the principal Duties prescribed in these Rules, with the sins that are opposed to them.

Now in the first place, to *worship God* is to honour him as **G**od, which consists

chiefly in Two things, *viz.* In a right esteem of him, and in the expression of it.

1. In the esteem, (*i. e.*) in believing God to be the Sovereign Being, infinite in all **perfections**, in **duration**, in **wisdom** and in **power**, and above all in **goodness**; from hence it is, that affections suitable to such an esteem of God are also **Worship**, because they are the most real acknowledgments of the **Divine Attributes**: He that trusts in the wisdom and power of God, more than in all the **World besides**, ascribes to him the honour of infinite wisdom and power; he that fears his displeasure and trembles at his word, gives him the honour of his infinite holiness; he that loves him above all things, doth thereby effectually confess his infinite goodness. By such apprehensions of God, and disposition towards him, we worship him in our **Hearts and Souls**.

2. As to the outward worship of God, it consists in such actions, as either by God himself or by the common consent of Mankind, or by the nature of the things are made expressions of **Divine Honour**, and of the worship of the Heart. *Sacrifices* have been ever esteemed marks of **Divine Honour**, given to that Being to whom they were offered; and God appropriated

appropriated them to himself in the Covenant he made with his own People, *He that sacrificeth unto any God, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed*, Exod. 22. 20. Whether Sin-offerings, or Thank-offerings, they were testimonies and declarations of God's Sovereignty, that he was Lord of all, and the Giver of all, to whom all praise and obedience was due. For this reason the Christian Worship, which knows no Sacrifice for Sin, but that which was never to be offered but once, and which has taken away the slaying of Beasts, and the killing of Birds; the Christian Worship it self, I say, is called a *Sacrifice*: By him, says the Apostle, (*i. e.*) by Christ, *let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually*, Heb. 13. 15. For though the gross Sacrifices were left off, yet there was an incommunicable Worship of God that remained, *viz.* the more spiritual Sacrifices of Prayer and Thanksgiving, which were the true meaning of the Sacrifices before Christianity, and therefore a more excellent Worship than they: For Sacrifices were but the Rites and Ceremonies of Prayer and Thanksgiving; a Sacrifice for Sin, was but the outward Rite of calling upon God for Mercy; a Sacrifice of Praise, was but the

outward Rite of offering Praise; and therefore Prayer and Thanksgiving are proper expressions of Divine Honour inasmuch as they are in effect the same with Sacrifices, and indeed a more excellent Worship than what was anciently called by that name. And there are these Two things, which make them to be proper expressions of honouring God, as God.

1. The matter of Religious Invocation, which is either to pray to God, or to give him thanks for those things which he only can give, and for every thing which we either need, or have received, and this makes Prayer and Thanksgiving to be an acknowledgment of God's Omnipotence, Sovereignty, and infinite Goodness.

2. Our calling upon him at all times, and in all places, which is a clear acknowledgment of his Omnipresence, and Infinite Knowledge. And hence it is that *hearing of Prayer* is one of those Titles, where with the Psalmist addressed himself to God, *Psalms 65. 2. And thou that hearest Prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.* For when we speak to an invisible Being, we can have no assurance that we are heard, but only this assurance, that the Being is every-where present, and therefore though we see him not yet we know that

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he is with us, and our Prayer is not lost.

And they are these Two things, each of which distinguishes that which in Religion we call Prayer and Thanksgiving, from asking benefits of one another, and giving thanks for benefits received; that the latter supposes a limited power, the former an absolute power over all things, and is expressed very often by desiring such things of God, as he only can bestow. And again when we ask fit things of one another, it is within the lines of civil communication, by speaking, if present, by messages, if absent; but when we speak to God, we speak to an invisible Being, whom we therefore acknowledge to be every-where present.

And in these two things, that is, in Prayer and Thanksgiving, or to include both in one expression, in Religious Invocation, the Substance of Divine Worship consists, and all other instances of it may be reduced to this :

Thus it is an Act of Divine Worship, to dedicate, or set apart Places for Prayer and Thanksgiving; for the erecting of Houses for the Service of an invisible Being, is an acknowledgment of his Omnipresence, no less then calling upon him there. Thus bodily Adoration, *Bowing*, *Kneeling*, or *Prostrating*, are Acts of Divine Worship  
also,



also, when they are paid to an Invisible Being, because they too suppose the presence of it every where, to receive those outward Honours, and to take notice of them.

And all this together, is that which we call the *immediate Worship of God*; because it is all an address or application to him: This is what we commonly mean by *Religious Worship*, though in a larger sense all Piety may be so called, and he that obeys God in all things, Worships him, because he makes an effectual acknowledgment of all the Divine Attributes.

2. Since we know what it is to Worship God, nothing should be more easie, than to understand that other Rule, mainly intended in the words of the Text, That *God only is to be worshipped: Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him O N L Y shalt thou serve: (i. e.)* Infinite Perfection is to be attributed to him only, Infinite Knowledge, or Power, or Goodness, or Presence, or Dominion is to be ascribed to him only; he only is to be loved and revered and trusted in above all things, and to be absolutely obeyed; to him alone we are to perform those Acts of Worship, which imply any part of that acknowledgment; and therefore to none but him are Religious Supplications, and Intercessi-

ons with Thanksgivings to be offered; besides him no other invifible Being ought to be addreffed unto by us: To him only we are to pay thofe bodily Adorations of Kneeling, Bowing, and Falling-down, which are properly Religious; that is, which accompany and go along with Prayer or Thankfgiving, or any acknowledgment of a Divine Perfection; we are to give to no other Being in the World that outward Worfhip, which by all the circumftances of it, is *Religious*, or a fignification of the leaft divine Honour.

Upon thefe grounds I intend to build, and now I fhall proceed to fhew what thofe Sins are, which manifefly oppofe and contradict thefe Rules; and they may, I think, be reduced to thefe Two, *Atheifm*, and *Idolatry*.

First, *Atheifm*, of which there are Two forts properly fo called: Either,

I. Not believing that there is a God:  
Or,

II. Not Worfhipping him.

I. Not believing a God: that is, an invifible Spiritual Being, which is the caufe of all things; and this is that which is commonly underftood by *Atheifm*, to deny the very Being of a God, which as it is the higheft ftupidity, and the greateft

*The Fifth Sermon.*

est corruption imaginable of a Man's Understanding, so it is fundamentally opposite to all pretences of Religion and Worship, which supposes the Being of God; of God I say, that is, of a spiritual and invisible Being, which knows and understands, which cando all things, and upon which all other things depend. But

2. There is another sort of *Atheism* truly so called, which consists with a Belief of the being of God; or at least doth not stand in a direct denial of his Being, and that is, not worshipping him: He that doth not worship G O D before Men, is an Atheist to the World; and he that worships him not at all, is an Atheist before the World, and in the sight of God too: and there is no reason to question, but he that is the one, is the other too. Every wicked Man though he professeth Religion, and Worships God, may indeed be called a Practical Atheist, because he lives, as if there were no God. But he that is grown to that degree of impiety, as to make no acknowledgment of him by appearing in his Worship, is much more so, and doth in effect renounce his Maker before the World, and it cannot be more truly said of any one, than of such a Man, that he lives *without God in the World*. And therefore  
although

although the *Epicurean* Sect acknowledged the Being of a God, yet because they denied his Providence, and took away all the Foundations of worshipping him, they were by all Men of sense called *Atheists*: This however is also directly opposite to the Rule we are upon, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God.* But

3. Idolatry is opposed to it likewise, and this is that impiety, which the Rule was chiefly designed against, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* Idolatry is a Term in Religion or Divinity, to which we must give that sense in which the Scripture uses it, and I think all are agreed, this to be the sense of it there, That it is *the giving of any Divine Worship to a Creature: (i. e.)* any part of that Worship which is due to God only; and therefore these words are a Rule against all Idolatry whatsoever, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, &c.*

Now, 1. All honour which is done to any invisible Being, besides God, by formal Invocation of it, or calling upon it, must therefore necessarily be Idolatry, because it ascribes in the very Nature of the Act Omnipresence to it, which is a Divine Perfection.

2. All

2. All the external Honours done to any such Beings, which refer to that Service are also Idolatrous, because they are significations of Divine Honour also, and therefore Dedicating Churches and Altars to them, Bowing, Kneeling, Prostrating, burning Incense, and the like Religious Rites performed to them, are Idolatry.

3. Any Service paid to a created Being, that is either visible or invisible, seen or not seen, present or absent, which Service doth imply that thing to be God, or ascribes any Divine Attribute to it, or much more that Service, which in all circumstances is the very same with what is given to God himself; this also must necessarily be an Idolatrous Service.

4. The Worship of an Image, or any visible Representation of any thing whatsoever, must be Idolatrous; for if it be worshipped as the Representation of a Creature, it cannot 'scape being so, if there were no more in it, than that Religious Worship is not to be given to the Original: But if it be the pretended Image of the Deity, the Worship of it is Idolatrous Worship; and the reason is plain, because it is set there to receive that external Worship at least, which is due to that invisible Being, whom it is

said to represent. But the Worship of God is to be given to him, and to none but him: I pass by two material things; one is, That the Image-Worship of the People is known to be attended with expectation of receiving benefit from the Image itself, which makes the Idolatry to be very gross in them; but inasmuch as Images are made the Object of outward Acts of Divine Honour, by all that worship them, they give to the Image that Worship which is to be paid to God only. Another is this, That to pretend to make an Image of God, is one of the grossest Dishonours that can be possibly done to him, because that supposes *the Godhead to be like unto wood, or to stone, and the work of mens hands*, and tends to corrupt the Notion of God in all that are made to believe that they are his Images or Representations; but I do not place Idolatry in that, tho' it be a great aggravation of it, but in the actual worshipping of it; and that because we are to worship the Lord our God, and serve him only: but to worship Images, is not to worship him; for God is one thing, and a pretended Image of him is another. All this I make bold to lay down peremptorily, being well assured that these kinds of  
Worship

Worship are prohibited in this Rule of *serv-  
ing God only*, and that these prohibited  
Worships are in the Scripture called Ido-  
latry, which I shall now more particularly  
prove, against a certain pretence, That *the  
true and only Notion of Idolatry is this, and  
that it is neither more nor less than this,*  
*viz. The Worship of the heavenly Bodies,*  
*the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars, or any  
other visible and corporeal Deity, as the  
Supreme God, so as to exclude all sense and  
apprehension of a spiritual and invisible  
Godhead.* The plain English of which is  
this: That no Man can be an Idolater;  
that is, not such a Sot, as to take some-  
thing, which he knows can neither under-  
stand any thing, nor choose one thing  
before another, to be the Supreme God,  
and as such, to worship it; as for instance,  
he must take something, which hath no  
more of a spiritual Nature in it, than a  
piece of stone, or a log of wood, and ex-  
clude all reference that it can have to any  
thing that hath a spiritual Nature, and he  
must fall down upon his knees to it, and  
speak to it, and desire it to bless him, and  
believe that it will do so, and he must with-  
al take it for his Supreme Deity, and then  
he shall be allowed to pass for an Idolater;  
nay more, for one that is not fit to live  
upon

upon the Earth, but to be cut off from the People ; as those *Israelites* were once to be served, who enticed their Brethren away to serve other Gods. Now for my own part, I do not think, that even these kinds of Worshipers, if there are any such to be found in the World, as I believe there are not, ought to be thus served ; for it were barbarous Inhumanity, to kill those, who ought to be taken care for in an *Hospital* proper for them : For what greater madness can be imagined, than for a Man at the same time to worship a senseless thing as the Supreme God, and to believe that it is a senseless thing, as he must do, if he excludes all apprehension of an invisible and spiritual Godhead : For by the Supreme God, all Men understand something that is able to help or to hinder, and that knows when to do the one, and when the other, and is willing to do accordingly : And therefore to worship either Sun, Moon, or Stars, or any visible or corporeal Deity, and at the same time to exclude all sense and apprehension of a spiritual and invisible Godhead, is to worship a thing, because I am sure it knows something, while I am as sure at the same time, that it knows nothing at all ; for that which has nothing of a spiritual and invisible Nature, has no



## The Fifth Sermon.

knowledge of any thing, no more than a block has; and if to worship such a thing, knowing it to be such, be all the Idolatry that ever was in the World, do believe you will all grant, that there never was an Idolater in the World, who might not have been easily perswaded to fall down upon his knees to a Tree, to believe it to be his Father, and to ask it blessing; only there is this difference in the case, that such a distempered Man might possibly believe that Tree capable of blessing him, but it seems the Idolater must be more mad than so, for he must at the same time believe that what he worships, knows nothing of him, and is not, and cannot be concern'd about him, because he concludes all sense and apprehension of a spiritual and invisible Godhead in his corporeal Deity. But if the Maker of the Notion did really think, that his Idolater was a Man in his Wits, then he has really made the Idolater to be the very same with the Atheist, whereas they are two Persons. This Rule of the Text hath two parts, as I have shewn; one, that we are to worship God, which he that doth not, is an *Atheist*; another, to worship God only, which he that doth not, is an *Idolater*? But now he that

hath

hath no sense and apprehension of a spiritual Godhead, and yet worships for the Supreme God, senseless Matter, does not; if he be in his Wits, believe that there is any God at all, and if he pretends to worship the Sun, or the Moon, or *Leeks* and *Onions*, without any reference to any thing, that can see or hear, help or hinder, understand or choose any thing, it is manifestly in derision of all pretence to Religion and Worship whatsoever: So that the true and only Notion of Idolatry, is only at last a true Notion of Atheism, very oddly represented, and so, as an ingenuous Atheist would have done it much better for himself. We are therefore to look upon this *True and Only Notion of Idolatry*, to be an over-strained repetition of what has been to much better advantage pretended by those of the *Roman* Communion: viz. That a Man cannot be an Idolater, who doth firmly believe there is One God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, and who doth worship him as the Supreme God and Lord of all. This indeed is something, that is, it is what we understand, but then this is very false, as I shall demonstrate by plain testimony of Scripture.

And in the first place, the Text seems

to give clear evidence against it, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only, &c.* For they all say, that this speaks of Divine Worship, and at other times they grant, that to give Divine Worship to any thing that is not God is Idolatry : But now the Text supposes, not only that a Man ought to give Divine Worship to God, but it expressly says, that he should give it to him only ; it is therefore possible to give Divine Worship to God, and to give Divine Worship to something else too, which is not God, and to do that, they themselves confess to be Idolatry, and therefore it is possible to acknowledge and to worship One God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, and yet to be guilty of Idolatry ; which is a point that I think fit to insist upon something more particularly, because I perceive there are many that are very loath to have it believed.

And first I shall insist upon that instance, which was the occasion of these words : The Devil promised our Saviour, That he would give him all the Kingdoms of the World, and the glory of them, if he would fall down and worship him. Now I think there is no question, but that to worship the Devil is Idolatry ; but the Question is, Whether the Devil was so arrogant as to

desire

desire to be worshipped, so, as to exclude the belief, and the worshipping of God, who is the Supreme Lord of all : But indeed, it ought not to be question'd, that he did not desire any such thing, but that himself acknowledged the Being of God : For in his very first Temptation he said, *If thou be the Son of God, &c.* which was a plain acknowledgment of the Being of God : and so in his second Temptation he said, *If thou be the Son of God, cast thy self down, for it is written, he shall give his Angels charge over thee, &c.* So that he did not only acknowledge the Being of God, but he acknowledged also the Truth of the Scripture : Nay, when he promised to Jesus *the kingdoms of the World, and the glory of them*, if he would *fall down and worship him* : it appears by St. Luke, that he did by no means pretend to be the Supreme Disposer and Governour of the World (*i.e.*) to be the Supreme God, but acknowledged him that was truly so ; for thus it is said, *Luk. 4. 6. And the Devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, for it is delivered to me, and to whomsoever I will I give it.* Now here the Devil plainly acknowledged, that this Power was but delivered to him, and not originally in him, and this was as plain a signification

as could possibly be given, that he did not design to draw our Saviour to worship him as the Supreme Deity, since he confessed a Superiour. Whereas therefore our Saviour answered him, *Get thee behind me Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, &c.* It seems very evident, that Divine Worship may be given to that which is not God, by one that acknowledges and worships the true God; for otherwise I am sure it had not been Idolatry to worship the Devil in these circumstances, who did by no means require our Saviour to worship him as the Supreme God; or not to worship him, who really is so. And here I cannot but observe, how instructing our Saviour's Answer was; for when the Devil tempted him to worship him, Jesus might have refused it justly enough upon another score, that no Honour was to be given to that Enemy of GOD and Man; but when omitting that consideration he spoke to the point in this manner, *It is written, thou shalt worship, &c.* he laid down a Rule to serve his Disciples in all like cases, even where they might be called not to worship a Devil but a Saint, not a bad Angel but a good one. *Thou shalt worship, &c.* If it be pretended in the behalf of Saints that they have great power

power with God in Heaven, and of Angels that they are his *ministering Spirits*, and therefore they are to be honoured with invocations, and bodily Worship by us upon Earth, we are to remember, that when the Devil pretended to have the Power of the Earth delivered into his hands, and promised that upon the desire of Jesus, and a little prostration to him, he would give it to him; our Lord did not give him that Answer which was peculiar to the particular case, as that he was a lying and wicked Spirit, and therefore no such acknowledgment was to be paid to him; but such an Answer as supposed it Idolatry to pay the same respect to any other created Being: *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, &c.*

But because the Notion of Idolatry was of necessity the same under the Gospel, that it was under the Law, since without any New Notions of it, the Apostles, who were Jews, Preached against Idolatry, we cannot go a better way to work to confute this pretence, *That they who acknowledge one Supreme God, cannot be guilty of Idolatry*; than by observing what was counted Idolatry under the Law.



I. Now we read *1 King. 11.* that *Solomon* in his old age turned away his heart, and worshipped other Gods, viz. *Ashtoreth* and *Milcom*, and *Chemosh*, and *Molech*: These were the Idols of the Nations round about the *Israelites*; and all the World knows, that the Service of Idols is Idolatry. But now, did *Solomon* renounce the God of Heaven and Earth, the Supreme Governour of the World, the God of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*? So he must have done according to the modern Notion of Idolatry, or else he could not be guilty of it: But if we may believe plain Scripture, so he did not; for mark, what is said *v. 4.* *His Wives turned away his heart after other Gods, and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his Father.* It seems then that his heart was not quite turned away from the Lord his God, but it was not perfectly with him, and that because he did not worship the Lord his God only, but served other Gods besides. Again, *v. 5, 6.* *Solomon went after Ashtoreth the Goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Amonites: And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his Father.* Now can that be said

of one that utterly renounceth the Belief, and worship of the Supreme Lord, that his heart doth not go fully after the Lord? These things are so plain, that they need no Illustration. To be short, in the Old Testament these Worshipships were esteemed and condemned as Idolatry.

1. To worship other Beings with the True God, which was the case of *Solomon* now mentioned, and of the *Samaritans*, *2 Kings 17. 41. Who feared the Lord, and served their graven Images: their own Gods.*

2. To worship Idols only, which seemed to be the case of *Ahab* and *Manasseh*, who had given over the Service of the God of *Israel*, but yet were not without all sense and apprehension of him; but for all that they addicted themselves wholly to the Service of false Gods.

3. The worshipping of the True God by a material Image or Representation of him; such, for instance, was the Idolatry of the *Golden Calf*, which the *Israelites* intended for a Representation of that God which had brought them out of the Land of *Egypt*; as it evidently appears from the Proclamation, *Exod. 32. These are thy Gods, or this is thy God, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the Land of Egypt*



*Egypt: And Aaron built an Altar before it, and made a Proclamation, and said, To morrow is a Feast to Jehovah, or to the Lord.* In vain it is said, that the *Israelites* fell to the *Egyptian* Idolatry; thus much I am willing to grant, that the *Israelites* missing *Moses*, took that very representation of the Supreme God, which they had seen in *Egypt*; for it is a foolish thing to imagine that the *Egyptians* themselves were without any sense or apprehension of the Supreme God; but that the *Israelites* fell to down right *Egyptian* Superstition, and copied all that they had learnt in *Egypt*, is undeniably false from this one argument that the *Israelites* offered Burnt-offerings, and brought Peace-offerings unto the Image they had set up, and as *Jeroboam* did afterwards, they offered *Bullocks and Rams* to the Idol, which Beasts being amongst the *Egyptians* held Sacred, were never sacrificed to their Idols; and for that very reason God commanded them to be offered to him; so that the *Israelites* in their Sacrificing, followed their Rule which they had received from God only; but missing *Moses*, they would have a visible Representation of the True God to go along with them; and for worshipping it they were called  
Idolaters,

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Idolaters, and punished as such. The instance of the Calves of Dan and Bethel, which Jeroboam did set up, the worshipping of which is called Idolatry, is to the same purpose; for all he pretended was, that it was too much for the Israelites to go up to Jerusalem to worship: Behold, says he, thy Gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, 1 Kings 12. 28. He did not forsake the God of Israel to follow other Gods, but he set up material Images or Representations of the True God, and it was his Idolatry to worship them: Hence the Prophets whom God raised up in Israel, did not charge the Worshippers of this sort for Deserters of the God of Israel, though they inveighed against their Altars: But when Ahab fell to worship other Gods, it was particularly noted of him, that he did therein what Jeroboam did not do; this latter sort of Idolatry was laid to Ahab's charge, 1 Kings 16. 13. to wit, That, as if it had been a small thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he went and served Baal, and worshipped him.

From all this it is plain, that whereas in the New Testament, the Apostles bid us beware of Idolatry, my dearly beloved  
flee

*flee from Idolatry: Little children keep your selves from Idols: and the like. They being Jews must necessarily by Idolatry mean the worshipping of the true God by Images, or giving any Divine Worship whatsoever any Honour due to God only, giving that I say, to any other Being how excellent soever, although they that do so, do believe and Worship the Supreme God, the Master of Heaven and Earth, all the while: For by Idolatry they could understand nothing but what went for Idolatry under the Law, seeing the Notion of it was not in the least altered, but it continued just the same that it was before, as these very words do witness. *Thou shalt Worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.**

But as I entred upon this Argument by distinguishing between Atheism and Idolatry, so I shall now close it, by comparing them together. Idolatry is indeed a very heinous sin, because it gives away the Glory of God to another; but Atheism is a worse, because that is a renouncing of the Lord of Heaven and Earth, the Creator of the World; they who do not serve the Lord, only are guilty of great impiety; but they who do not serve and worship him at all, are guilty

guilty of a greater impiety. To worship God, and to worship Angels, to pray to God, and to pray to Saints, to adore Jesus Christ, and to adore the Virgin, is in part to forsake God and our Saviour ; but neither to worship or pray to Saints and Angels, no nor to God himself, this is utterly to forsake him, and to live without God in the World : Which I do not say to extenuate the Crime of Idolatry, but to give every thing its due, and to leave this impression upon our Mind, that by how much more we inveigh against the Idolatry of others, because it is no less than giving some of God's Glory to his Creature, by so much the more we oblige ourselves to be constant and devout, and in very good earnest in the Worship of the only true God, least by degrees we fall into a Spirit of Irreligion and Atheism, and be wholly estranged from God, which is a worse case than *Solomon's* was, who falling into the Idolatry of his Neighbours, fell under this Character, *That his heart was not perfect with the Lord, and he went not fully after him.*

To conclude, since through the Grace of God it is our Happineness to worship the Lord our God, and to serve him only, let us have a care that we go on to worship  
ship

## The Fifth Sermon.

ship God only, and to be sure let us remember, that we worship him, that we be not slothful in Religion, but earnest and fervent, lest we forsake God by a Spirit of Irreligion, which is every way as damnable as Idolatry. Let it appear by our whole Conversation, that we do indeed worship the God that made Heaven and Earth, who only hath power to bless us, to protect and keep us in this Life, and to reward us with the enjoyment of himself for ever.

## The Sixth Sermon.

### GEN. XXII. xii

*Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing  
thou hast not withheld thy son, thine  
only son from me.*

**I**N these words we may observe Two  
Things.

I. God's Testimony concerning *Abraham*, *Now I know that thou fearest  
God.*

II. The Fact upon which this Testi-  
mony of God concerning him was  
grounded, which was his offering his  
Son *Isaac* to God, *Because thou hast  
not withheld thy son, thine only son  
from me.*

I. The Testimony of God concerning  
him, *I know that thou fearest God*; this, I  
say,

say, was God's Testimony concerning him: For whereas it is said, *That the Angel of the Lord called to him out of Heaven*; it seems plain that the *Angel of the Lord*, was no other than the *Angel of the Covenant*, the Son of God himself, who did sometimes appear to the Patriarchs, for the words are, *Seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me*, (i. e.) from God; it was God that spake to him, and who said, *Now I know that thou fearest God*. The matter God testified of him, was, *That he feared God*; that is, that he believed in God, that he was fully persuaded of his Infinite Power, Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness, and all his Infinite Perfections, and that he was affected suitably thereunto: This is the meaning of the *Fear of God* in the Scripture, which is a Phrase used to comprehend all pious Affections towards him, and is therefore of the same latitude with *Faith*, the Praise whereof is ascribed to *Abraham* by the Author to the *Hebrews*. The only thing to be added is this: That we must remember, that to fear God, is to fear him as God; that is, before and above all other things, and consequently to love him, and to trust in him, and to rely upon him incomparably and infinitely more than upon



upon all the World besides, inasmuch as the Perfections of all others are finite, God only is infinite in all Perfections : Now this was that which God testified of *Abraham*, in saying of him, that he *feared God*; and in the understanding of this, there is no difficulty at all. But it may seem strange, that God should give this Testimony of him in that manner, wherein we find he did : *Now know I that thou fearest God* : Now, (*i. e.*) now *thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me* : For did not God know the integrity of *Abraham's Heart* before? Is not God *the Searcher of Hearts*, and doth he need our outward Actions, that he may judge of our Tempers and Intentions by them? It is true, we have no other way to come to the understanding of one anothers Thoughts, but by our Words and Deeds : But hath God no other way? Yes, without all doubt, he that *knoweth our thoughts afar off*, even before they are born within us, cannot be ignorant of them when they are : But why then doth he say, *Now I know that thou fearest God*? I answer, That this is one of those Sayings of God, by which he is pleas'd to condescend to the manner of our speaking and conversing with one another. For we with great

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propriety use such expressions as these, upon such extraordinary occasions : It is from my Friend, that hath always professed great kindness to me, I receive some notable benefit in my distress, not without hazard to himself, it is very proper for me to say, *Now I know that he loves me* : Now I know he is indeed a faithful and sincere Friend, though I had great reason to make no doubt of it before; yet this is so great a confirmation and strengthening of my belief, that in comparison thereto, I might be said to know little or nothing of it before : In allusion to such expressions it is, that God useth these words, *Now I know that thou fearest God* : Not in intimation of his having now gained greater assurance of Abraham's Integrity, than he had before. Abraham had been for a long time the Servant of God, and had made an open profession of worshipping and obeying him, and God saw all along that he was an upright man, and this no less before he was bidden to offer his Son *Isaac*, than after he had stretched forth his hand to slay him upon the Altar ; and therefore the meaning of these words is this, and no more : The thing is now plain and undeniable to all, that thou fearest God. But why would

would God have *Abraham's* Faith made so plain and unquestionable? Why must such a Tryal as this be made, since it could not be to let God into a more thorough knowledge of *Abraham*, than he had before? I answer, it must be either for the sake of *Abraham* himself, or for the sake of others, or for both.

Let us first see what advantage the success of this Tryal was to *Abraham* himself. And,

1. I think we need not doubt, that he was a most excellent Man all along, yet even this Noble Act of Faith, which is the subject of this Chapter, made him yet a greater and a better Man than he was before: For so it is, that as by bad Actions, bad Men grow worse, so by good ones, good Men grow better, and by exceeding and extraordinary Acts of Faith and Virtue they grow much better.

2. *Abraham* was indeed conscious before of his own Integrity, yet when God put him upon so severe a Tryal as this was, the performance of his Duty, though it did not add to God's assured knowledge of *Abraham's* Integrity, yet it added to the assurance which *Abraham* had of himself: For though there are no degrees of cer-

tainty in God, yet there are in Men. And though *Abraham* was well assured before, that he feared God, yet his quitting himself so well upon so extraordinary an occasion, could not but add to his assurance: And that is one advantage that all good Men have by those particular Tryals of their Faith, which do not happen commonly, that how hard soever they are to Flesh and Blood, yet if they behave themselves as they ought, they gain this satisfaction by it, to be more certainly perswaded of their own sincerity; and doubtless *Abraham* had no ordinary satisfaction of Mind in the Confidence of having obeyed God, requiring so hard a thing, especially since God did not leave him to gather the comfort of his sincerity, from his Obedience in the way of reasoning, but did also add a particular Revelation to give him the highest assurance that could be had: *I know*, says he, *that thou fearest God*: And so he had the assurance of so concerning a point from God himself, not only for the increase of his Joy, but that this Example might yield good Instruction to others who are not to expect such immediate Revelations: And this brings me to the

Second

Second Answer, That although this tryal of *Abraham's* Faith could add nothing to the knowledge which God had of his sincerity, yet it was very beneficial to others, that he should be so tryed, and that upon his good and worthy carriage under it, God should so plainly and particularly testifie his integrity; we are therefore to mind attentively the instruction, that *Abraham's* example, and God's approving his sincerity affords to the World: And the

First Point of Instruction I shall name is this: That that Faith in God, which will gain his approbation and reward, is a lively and working Faith. When we consider, that God himself vouchsafed upon so eminent an act of Faith, as that of *Abraham's* offering up his Son, when I say himself was pleased to condescend to such an expression as this, *Now know I that thou fearest me*; as if the matter hitherto had been uncertain to him, what can we make less of it, than that God took this opportunity, nay that God made this opportunity to declare to the World, that he who should not bring forth the proper Fruits of Faith in God, and fear of God shall be reckoned of by him, as one that hath no Faith at all, no fear of

God at all; and what is thus true of the fear of God, is true of Trust in God too; I have already noted, that what is here called *the fear of God*, is by the Author of the *Hebrews* called *Faith*; and therefore if our fear of God, our apprehension of his Almightyness, his justice, and wisdom, holiness, and sovereignty, will not be at all regarded or owned by him, unless it doth produce a conformity of our actions to his will, but we shall on the contrary be looked upon, as if we did not fear him at all, the argument is very strong, that our Faith separated from the performance of that which God requires and expects from us, will not be looked upon as Faith, it will not be the *Faith by which a man is justified*. For I beseech you Brethren, is not the fear of God, a belief of his justice, and his power, and his holiness, and his infinite perfections, and something more than a bare belief of them, *viz.* such a belief as is accompanied with some awe, dread, and reverence of God? But if Faith working by inward Fear, and yet failing to produce the performance of what God expects from us, will not be owned as the fear of God, when we come to stand or fall by his Sentence, then how much less shall mere Faith or Perswasion be reckoned as any thing worth, when

when separated from the fruits of it in Life and Action? Since upon *Abraham's* offering up his Son according to Gods Command, God was pleased to say, *Now I know that thou fearest God*: We cannot imagine what could have been said on the other side, if he had refused to hearken to God's Voice, but this, *Now I know that thou dost not fear God*. I will not therefore dispute, nay I need not dispute, whether a Man, who upon the tryal of his Obedience, departs from his Duty, whether he (I say) may not yet be said to believe in God, and to fear God, and to stand in some awe of his Justice and Power; for whether this may be truly said or not, yet it is all one, as to his acceptance with God: God will not own that to be Faith, or Fear, or Trust, or Love, or Dependance upon God, which doth not produce the doing of his Will, and the fulfilling of his Commands, when he is pleased to try our Obedience in any notable instance; wherefore those words, wherein God condescends to our manner of speaking, *Now I know that thou fearest God*, are a natural intimation of this great Truth, that nothing will pass with him for the fear of God, but that which produces a conformable Practice and Obedience, in all the tryals of our submission to his Will:

for undoubtedly God knew the Integrity of *Abraham's Heart* before, and therefore since he would not give this Testimony to him, till he had made it plain by this eminent act of Obedience, and since he gave this Testimony, as if he had but now been assured of it, what instruction doth this yield more readily, than that no Man shall be acknowledged by God, to be one that fears him, but he that upon tryal doth what God requires ; and therefore that we should not presume upon the goodness of our Hearts and intentions towards God, when our Actions contradict our Pretences : It is true, God sees the Qualities and Dispositions of our Minds with an Infallible Judgment, but we not so certainly ; it is hard for us to tell what degree of Faith or Fear is proper to Gods Children, is justifying, or saving : But if in the hardest tryals of thy Obedience, thou dost keep Gods Commandments, then thou art sure that thou fearest God ; and because God would have thee try thy self by this Rule, he was pleased to testifie his own knowledge, that *Abraham* feared him, upon *Abraham's* ready Obedience, as if he had not known it before.

- 2. Another point of Instruction, and of good use in all Ages of the World, is this,

this, That God hath some Servants, and Worshippers, who are not hired to the Profession of serving him, by the worldly ease, profit, and security, that Religion brings, and who, when that expectation fails them, will not turn their backs upon him, to choose another Master. The Devil insinuated against Job. That he served God, because *God had made a bedge about him, and about his House, and all that he had on every side, because he had blessed the work of his hands, and increased his substance in the land: but if God would put forth his hand, and touch all that he had, then he would curse him to his face: (i. e.)* That then he would be as profane, as he was before godly in outward appearance: But upon tryal it proved otherwise, and he retained his Integrity, saying, *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil,* Job. 2. 10. Such another instance of this kind was Abraham, God had blessed him with great Encrease and Prosperity upon the leaving of his Country, and there was nothing wanting to compleat his Desires, but an Heir to his Blessings, which God had a long time denied him, and at length gave him. But it might be hitherto objected against the sincerity of Abraham's fear



fear of God and dependance upon him, that he perceiving how much for the better it was that he left his Country at the Call of God, and finding now that all things went well with him, did therefore make profession of serving the only true God, because he found that it was the way to compass all that his heart could desire in the World: How therefore should it appear that he behaved himself Religiously out of Conscience of his Duty, in an absolute and entire dependance upon God's Sovereign Power, Wisdom, and Goodness? And that was a thing very necessary to be made out, for the Credit of Religion in the World, and to demonstrate the ingenuity and sincerity of the Righteous. There could be no other way so effectual, no demonstration so clear as this, that *Abraham* without murmuring and disputing should let go the dearest of all his Possessions, in obedience to the Command of God; and this was the tryal God made of his sincerity. There was nothing that he held more dear to him than his only Son; for whose sake it was, that he did set a value upon all the rest of his possessions; well therefore might it be said upon his ready compliance with this severe Command, *Now I know that thou fearest God*: This being as much as to say,

Now

Now thy sincerity is put beyond all question, and all Men must acknowledge, that thou art in good earnest, what thou hast all along pretended to be, one that truly fearest God, and who therefore dost that which is good not for worldly and mercenary Ends, but because thou art absolutely resolved to depend upon God's Wisdom and Goodness, in doing every thing that he requires. And we must not think, Brethren, that this Testimony of *Abraham's* Faith and Sincerity was given him only for his own sake, but for the sake of all good Men, that should in any Age of the World tread in the steps of *Abraham's* Faith, viz. That all Religious Men are what they are, not for worldly Respects, but for Conscience towards God. And therefore the tryal of *Abraham's* Faith, did not only vindicate him, but all God's faithful Servants to the end of the World, from the charge of Hypocrisie, and pretending Religion for worldly Ends: Indeed he was tryed in the most extraordinary instance that could be well thought of, and there was this reason for it, because he was to be the *Father of the Faithful*, the great Example of Faith and Religion: And it well became him, who was to have so great an Honour conferr'd upon him in  
all

all Ages, to undergo such a tryal of his Faith, as might not only be a standing Example of our Duty, but a means to vindicate our Sincerity against the Reproaches of the World, though we be not tryed as *Abraham* was. For if Religion in the general be charged with the Hypocrisie of compassing worldly Advantages, under a pretext of Conscience, we desire them to look to the Example of our Father *Abraham*, and to consider the proof that he gave of his Sincerity, and God's Testimony concerning him, *Now I know that thou fearest God*. And this is the temper and disposition of all *Abraham's* Children, that they depend upon God's Providence, not because they have a good Estate, that they are righteous and just; not because it is the way to thrive, that they serve God; not because he *makes an hedge about all they have*; and observe the Rules of Religion, not meerly because they are under no unusual temptations to the contrary, and the like, but because believing in God, and fearing and loving him in good earnest, they are perswaded they ought so to demean themselves in expectation of his Favour, which is *better than Life*, and of his Rewards in a better World. In short, *Abraham the Father of the faithful*

*faithful* was therefore tryed in this manner, that there might be in him an undeniable instance of the sincerity, and ingenuity of true believers to the end of the World, who live in all good Conscience, not expecting the profit of this World in recompence of their Piety and Justice, and that Religion will secure their Bodies from Sicknes, their Goods from Rapine, their Names from Reproach, their Persons from Affronts, and their course of Life from common, or from unusual Troubles and Afflictions: *Abraham* and his Children do not traffick with Heaven by their Prayers and Charity, to secure or encrease their Possessions on Earth: And though God hath often blessed good Men, as he did *Abraham*, with strange prosperity in this World, yet this was not their end, nor the reason of their dependance upon God, and doing his Will; but they were such as they were, by Faith: *By faith they wrought righteousness*, Heb. 11. 33. (*i.e.*) They did that thing which God required, because they expected an heavenly Country, and believed God to be a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, though not always with the prosperity of this Life, yet without fail with those pure and ravishing Joys of a better World, which

which will shortly begin and never end. To conclude this point, it hath been very often the Charge of the World upon all the Professors of Piety, that in their Hearts they are as bad as others, whatever their appearance be, that they are as much in love with the Wealth and Pleasures of this Life, as those that profess to make them their end; and therefore to vindicate the sincerity of his Servants, God does sometimes make them undeniable demonstrations of the falshood of this Charge. These are the principal points of Instruction, that are contained in the Testimony God gave to *Abraham*. I pass on to the Second General in the Text, *viz.*

II. The Fact upon which this Testimony of God concerning *Abraham* was grounded, which was his offering up his Son *Isaac* to God, according to that Command which he had received, *Because thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.* And here I shall briefly consider,

1. The Nature of the Fact: And
2. The Nature of the Tryal, which the Fact supposes.

1. The Nature of the Fact, which was, his *stretching forth his hand to slay his son upon the altar*: And all I shall say, as to this matter, is, that God in that case did

did not command Murder which is a thing that he had absolutely forbidden; for the Command of God made it not to be Murder, if it had been affected, as it was fully designed on *Abraham's* part. God is the absolute Lord of Life and Death, and can without doing any wrong take away Life at his pleasure, and he may do it which way he pleases, by commanding *Abraham* to kill his Son, as well as by commanding a Fever to do it: If *Abraham* had not had that Command his intention had been wicked; such slaying were murderous, not commanded; but the Command of God, who hath an absolute Right to dispose of every Man's Life, made it not to be Murder, if it had been effected indeed. This is enough for the Nature of the Fact considered in it self. But

2. We are to consider it, as it was a tryal of *Abraham's* Faith, and submission to God, and procured that Testimony, *Now I know that thou fearest God.* And here there are these two things very remarkable:

1. That God singled out his beloved Possession to be offered forthwith for a Sacrifice to himself, *Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains*

mountains which I will tell thee of. God laid before him all the stings of so hard an Injunction, *Take thy son*, and that *thine only son*, I know thou lovest him dearly, but yet he must be a Sacrifice to me, and a Sacrifice offered by thine own hand. This was such a saying, as that of Jesus teaching the height of sincere Religion: *He that will be my disciple must deny himself: He that loveth father or mother, or children, or houses or lands, or his own life more than me, is not worthy of me*: For we cannot think that he who would give up such a Possession to God, to wit, his only Son, would deny him any thing: had all his Flocks and his Herds, his whole Wealth and Possessions, nay had himself been called for, to become a Sacrifice to God, he that denyed not to God his only Son, would not have denied him these. Here was an example indeed of absolute Resignation to God, of Universal Acquiescence in his Will: Here was indeed the Spirit of true Religion, that *Abraham* counted nothing too dear for his Maker; for this Command was in effect, as if God had said, *Take now all that thou hast, without exception of any thing, be thou as naked as when thou camest into the World, strip thy self of every thing, and lay it be-*  
fore

fore me, to be disposed of, as I please : And had this been demanded, had all been required, he that offered his only Son, would with the same readiness have parted with all his Possessions. Herein therefore consisted the tryal of *Abraham's* Faith and Obedience, which the Fact supposes, that when the Question was, Whether he loved God above all things, and feared him above all things, and trusted in him above all things : this one single act was a demonstration that he did : Which ought to put us in mind, that God requires an entire Obedience to, and Dependance upon himself, and the giving up our most desirable Possessions to him, when his Word, or his Providence calls for them, and that thus we are to be disposed, if we be the Children of *Abraham* who was the *Father of the Faithful*.

It is farther remarkable under this head, that God required *Abraham* to do this forthwith, without disputing and delaying; and therefore the Command was not only a tryal of what *Abraham* would do in an extreme hard case, but also how he was constantly provided and prepared to do, as became God's Servant in such a case : It had not been so notable a tryal of the goodness of the Man, if he had had a



Week, or a Month's time allowed him to lay all things together, and to reason out the case, and to bring himself to a willingness by such arguments, as the matter would bear; for then it had been supposed, that *Abraham* had not duly weighed these things before, nor lived in a constant and habitual sense of his Duty, which was to obey universally, but in some extraordinary tryal of his Obedience, must have time allowed him to prepare himself for it. But this tryal coming of a sudden, and the Command being to be executed forthwith, as it was, plainly demonstrated, that *Abraham* was always ready to offer up his Son, and could never have been taken unprovided to do the Will of God in the most difficult case: And therefore his example doth not only instruct us, that God is to be entirely submitted to, but that we are to be always ready, and prepared in heart and mind to do well, upon the tryal of our Faith and Obedience, that when it happens in any notable instance, we may in some measure come up to that perfection in Self-resignation to God, which *Abraham*, as far as it appears by the History of him, was a Pattern of: For he did set himself to part with his *All* without murmuring, and expostulating, and disputing;

disputing; for some such thing seems to be intimated in that saying, That *he rose early in the morning*, and immediately went about the execution of God's Command: Though without doubt a Man of his humane and tender affections could not but feel pain in receiving this command of God, and an uneasy struggling between his Faith in God, and his Affection to his Child; yet it doth not appear, that this delayed his resolution, to do what God required, or raised in him any dispute, what to conclude upon: But though it was grievous to do it, yet because it was God's pleasure, he forthwith set himself to obey. This perfection of Obedience is what we should aim at, for the greater Glory of God, and for our own greater security; and I will add for our ease too: For he that submits to God with the least disputing, when the tryal is great, doth it with the least pain; but it will be accepted by God, if we prevail at last, and do the thing that God expects, in quitting all, to secure an Interest in him, although not with the same readiness that *Abraham* did, though not without complaint, and some disputing; for God will pardon our Infirmities, if there be a prevailing sincerity at the bottom, that

overcomes the reluctance of Flesh and Blood. But we should labour to come up to the perfection of *Abraham's* example, and consider well with our selves, that it is our constant profession and preterice, as well as it was *Abraham's*, to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and to hold nothing too dear for him; and withal, that there is nothing which God can require us to quit voluntarily, but he has an absolute Right to dispose of it, and has absolute Power to deprive us of it, whether we will or not: When therefore God requires, that we should freely resign that to him, which he can take away if he pleases, it is evident that he requires this, not for his own good, but for ours: If he had needed *Isaac*, and it had been beneficial to himself that *Isaac* should be killed, what need of *Abraham* to do it? And surely it is a mighty reason without delay to per God's Will and Command in execution, when we know beforehand, that all is meant for our good, not that God is the better, for that which we quit, but because we are the better for doing it freely and voluntarily.

2. The other remarkable is, That God required of *Abraham* to offer up  
that

that his only Son, in whom *his seed should be called*, through whom all those great Promises were to be fulfilled, which he had made to him before; and here-in consisted the nobleness of *Abraham's Faith*, that though God seemed to require that, which would destroy all the hope he had by those Promises, which hitherto he had firmly believed, yet he believed still, and submitted to do that, which in all appearance, was utterly inconsistent with the truth of those Promises that had been made to him; so that he *against hope, believed in hope*: And this is that which the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* lays an Emphasis upon, chap. II. *By Faith Abraham when he was tryed, offered up Isaac and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten Son*, his only Son, through whom those Promises were to be fulfilled. Now, though he could in obedience to God get over the difficulty, that Natural Affection laid in his way, yet here was the hard point, how he should get over that temptation to unbelief, which struck at the very Root of his Faith: God had promised before, that *in Isaac his seed should be called*. If he believed him now, how did it not appear that he was deceived

before? If he was not deceived before, in trusting to that Promise, how could he be obliged to do that, which would take away all reason to believe that Promise any longer? But yet without any of this disputing and contending, he went speedily about the matter, he *rose up early in the morning*, and takes his Son along with him to that place where he was to offer him up. Now if you ask how it was possible for him to believe in God, notwithstanding this Command; mark what the Apostle says, *By faith he that received the promises, offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead, from whence also he received him in a figure.* That is to say, he so fully believed all God's Promises made to him before, that his Faith was not staggered with the seeming inconsistency of this Command of God, with his former Promises; but concluded, if there was no other way, God would raise up *Isaac* from the dead; for he accounted, that is, he was fully perswaded, that God was able to raise him from the dead, as in a sort he did, by stopping his hand, when he was about to slay him: And

now

now if upon the former consideration *Abraham's* sincerity deserved so high a testimony, much more upon this; for it is the highest praise of Faith, to trust that God will make good all his Promises, even when the way he takes so to do, seems to be utterly inconsistent with them: Well therefore might God upon this high act of Obedience renew his Covenant with *Abraham*, in saying, *By my self have I sworn, that because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in thy seed shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed.* And observe here I beseech you, how highly God was pleased with this Noble Act of Faith, and how fitly the Promise wherewith God immediately rewarded him, agreed to what *Abraham* had done: *By my self have I sworn, that because thou hast done this thing, in blessing I will bless thee:* Words cannot express a greater delight than these do: One would think that *Abraham* had done some singular kindness to his God, and if God were to be judged of, as we judge of Man, that God had received an extraordinary favour and benefit from him. But such is the infinite and pure Charity of God, that

when we do what is good for our selves, it is no less pleasing to him, then if it were beneficial to himself: But because *Abraham* had conquered the greatest Temptation of all to Disobedience, viz. That the thing commanded seemed to destroy all the Promises he had made of a Blessed Posterity, that should descend from him by *Isaac*; God now rewarded his Faith with repeated Assurances: *By my self have I sworn, that in thy seed shall all the Nations of the earth be blessed.* And so well might the *Jews* in their Peace-offerings, when they thankfully acknowledged the goodness of God, in giving them the possession of so good a Land, call to mind the offering of *Isaac*, as the great Foundation of all those Temporal Blessings, which they, as the seed of *Abraham* enjoyed.

And after such a demonstration as this, well may we trust God in all Conditions, if we resolve to do as *Abraham* did, if we count none of his Commandments grievous, if we do not repine at his Providences, if we go on to serve him, and to depend upon him, though when we must hope against hope; for then God will not fail to shew, that we have wisely trusted in him, and cast our selves upon him, he will shew himself as much pleased with our Faith,

Faith, as he was with *Abraham's*, and will reward it as effectually.

To sum up all: The Testimony of God to *Abraham's* Faith, was not given merely for his own sake, but for the Instruction and Encouragement of all true Believers to the World's end, who when they deny themselves, and do the hardest Duties, and are never offended with the Will of God, have, I say, a Title to the Testimony God gave to *Abraham*: Now *I know that thou fearest God*. Certainly it would be no mean encouragement to us; it would raise up our minds to very great degrees of Joy and Triumph, to have God say that to us, that he did to *Abraham*; but we are to remember that it was said to him once for all, in behalf of all his Children, that should tread in the steps of his faith: This was not an Honour given to *Abraham* only, though to him principally, and in the first place; it was done him also for the Credit of Religion in all Ages of the World, and for the comfort and joy of all Religious and Holy Men and Women to the end of the World.

Wherefore, my Brethren, that we may come in for some share in the Praise and Reward of *Abraham's* Faith, let there be  
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in none of us *an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God*: The *evil heart of unbelief*, is the evil heart that causeth unbelief, (*i. e.*) some corrupt inclination, some unmortified Lust, some carnal interest or other. Do thou therefore in the first place, when thou hast an eye upon the example of *Abraham*, conceive how much thou art obliged to take thy sin, thy dearly beloved sin, whatever it be, and slay it, that is the first Sacrifice thou canst offer to God, to wit, a *broken and contrite heart*, an heart clean from worldly and sinful Lusts. Do this, and thou wilt find nothing too dear for God, thy Faith will then make thee to be entirely at the disposal of his Will and Pleasure, it will justify and support thee in so doing, and the *God of Abraham* will be thine exceeding great reward.

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The

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## The Seventh Sermon.

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MATTH. XV. 1, 2, 3.

*Then came to Jesus Scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy Disciples transgress the Tradition of the Elders, for they wash not their hands when they eat bread? But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the Commandment of God by your Tradition?*

**T**Hough never Man was so unreprouvable in his Doctrine and Example, as our Lord Jesus, yet never was Man more opposed or cavilled at, as the Evangelists do abundantly testifie, that History of him, which they have written for us, being upon the matter made up of the Holy Doctrines which he delivered, the good works in which he was always employed, and the contradictions

contradictions which he continually met with : And it was very necessary that some instances of the last should be recorded for our sakes, that they who profess the *Truth as it is in Jesus*, should not think it strange, if they happened to meet with such opposition as their Master did ; and likewise, that by his Answers to the Cavils of his Adversaries, they might be instructed how they should defend themselves afterwards against the like Objections. One instance whereof we have in the Text, I have now chosen to speak to ; *Then came to Jesus Scribes and Pharises, which were of Jerusalem, &c.*

As to which words, I shall not need to say much concerning the Persons, that our Saviour had to deal withal, because their Character is so well known to all, that diligently read the Gospels. The Scribes were the Men that professed to teach the Law, and expected to have all their interpretations received as Oracles. The Pharises were the most subtle and prevailing Sect amongst the Scribes ; for though as things were in that Age, and for some time before, the Scribes generally agreed in corrupting the Law, and deceiving the People, yet they had their Parties and Factions among themselves, the Pharises in our  
Saviour's

Saviour's time being a Sect of the greatest power in the Council, and of the greatest Reputation with the People, and whereas it is said, that they were the Scribes and Pharisees, or the Scribes of the Pharisaical Party, which were of *Jerusalem*, that came to Jesus; the meaning is, that they were such as kept their Schools in the City of *Jerusalem*, and were therefore of the first rank amongst the Pharisees. And now I shall discourse to you of these two things:

*First*, Of the Objection which these Men made against Jesus and his Disciples.

*Secondly*, Of the Answer which our Saviour made to the Charge that was laid against them.

I. Of the Objection, which these Men made against Jesus and his Disciples: *Why do thy Disciples transgress the Tradition of the Elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.* A Charge laid with as much confidence as anger, and therefore they scorned to put any of his Disciples to answer it, and thought fit to challenge the Master himself about it. Now the first thing that is proper to be considered here,

I. The

1. The nature of the Charge, which seems to be a general one illustrated by one particular instance : The general Charge was, that the Disciples of Jesus *transgressed the Tradition of the Elders* : The particular instance was, that they transgressed such Tradition, in *not washing their hands before meat*.

As to the general Charge, they had *transgressed the Tradition of the Elders*. But what was the Tradition of the Elders? The Tradition of the Elders, was the Doctrine that had been delivered, and the Rules that had been laid down by wise and great Men, and universally received in former Ages. One would think therefore, that the Laws of *Moses*, and the Rules of the Prophets, and whatsoever was commanded in the Scriptures, had been the *Tradition of the Elders*, for all these things had been delivered down by an uncontrollable Tradition from hand to hand, for near two thousand years. But there was no such meaning under these words, as they used them. By *the Tradition of the Elders*, or by the ancient Tradition of wise and great Men, they meant no Doctrines or Rules for Faith or Practice, that were expressed in the Writings of *Moses* and the Prophets, but such Doctrines as not being

written

written in the Law, were delivered down by word of Mouth, and by constant usage from Father to Son, and so from one Age to another. And thus *Josephus* tells us, *Antiq.* 13. 13. That the first and main Principle of the Pharisees was, that they de-nyed all those things to be written, which concerned Religion. The Fundamental Rule of their Sect was this, that there was a double Law, an *Oral* Law, and a *Written* Law: A Law delivered from Age to Age by word of Mouth, as well as a Law delivered in such Books, as had Authority from *Moses* and the Prophets. To gain reverence to these Traditions, they persuaded the People, that though they were not written in the Law, yet they were delivered to *Moses* by God himself, to *Joshua* by *Moses*, to the Prophets by *Joshua*, to *Esdra*s by the Prophets, and thence to the Masters of the Schools, of whom they were the Successors: And they being the Guardians of these unwritten Traditions which were to be had in equal, or rather superior regard to that which the Scriptures were to be held in, claimed also an absolute Obedience from the People, inso-much, that it was a saying amongst them: If the Scribes say, *that the right hand is the left, or the left hand the right*, you are to believe

believe them. Now the Charge of the Pharisees upon our Saviours Disciples, was not, that they had transgressed any Tradition that appeared to have a Divine Original, by the Books of *Moses* and the Prophets, but that they had *transgressed the Tradition of the Elders*, as they used to call them, such Traditions for which they had no other pretence, than that they were conveyed down by word of mouth from Father to Son, amongst the wise Men, and the Masters, and the Scribes.

The particular instance to explain the general Charge was this, that the Disciples did *not wash their hands, before they eat bread*. For one of those many Traditional Doctrines, for which they were so zealous, was this, that if a Stranger, or an uncircumcised Person should but touch a *Jew*, the *Jew* was forthwith defiled, or if he had but touched any thing, that a *Jew* afterward touched, he was unclean; and if the *Jew* should in that state take any meat to eat, that Meat was rendred unclean, and would defile his Mind; for the preventing of which danger, it was a part of Religion, to wash before eating; and thus for an idle fancy they invented an idle relief, and placed so much Religion in it, that says one of them,

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He that eats bread with unwashen hands  
 sins as much as if he had lain with a Whore ;  
 And says another, *It is the highest point of*  
*holiness for a man to separate himself from*  
*the vulgar, and that he doth not touch them,*  
 nor so much as eat or drink with them ;  
 and the next to this, is to wash away the  
 impurity that is contracted thereby : You  
 may see a more particular account of this  
 senseless Superstition of theirs, in *Mark 7.*  
*The Pharises, and all the Jews, except they*  
*wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the*  
*Tradition of the Elders. And when they*  
*come from the market, except they wash,*  
*they eat not : And many other things there*  
*be, which they have received to hold, as*  
*the washing of cups, and pots, brazen ves-*  
*sels, and of tables :* that is, they did not  
 only wash their own hands, least they  
 should have touched some stranger, or one  
 less pure than themselves, but least some  
 stranger should have touched the Cup, in  
 which they drank, or the Dish in which  
 their Meat was, or the Tables upon which  
 the Cups were to stand ; these were wash-  
 ed with all care, not for cleanliness, for  
 that would not serve the turn ; but for ho-  
 lieness sake, as if their Minds were made  
 pure, by washing their Hands and Cups,  
 and all things of this sort. This was one

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kind of their Traditionary Doctrines, for transgressing of which the Disciples of Jesus were accused by the Pharises.

II. We may observe these Two things implied in the Charge :

1. The concern which the Scribes had for their Traditions. And,

2. The reverence in which the People held them.

1. The concern of the Scribes and Pharises to have them observed: It was so great, that a Man might with less danger from them, break a plain Law of God, than transgress one of their Traditions, and they would sooner call him to an account for this latter, than for the former; if they could have charged our Lord's Disciples with breaking the Fifth Commandment, as Jesus charged them with it presently after, of this they would have said nothing: But they were not able to bear the neglect of the Disciples to wash before eating, for Conscience-sake: And when he had given the Multitude a plain account of this neglect, neither could they bear that, but were offended at him, *v.* 12. Hence in their *Talmud* . a Book that pretends to have gathered up their Oral Traditions, it is said, That there is more in the words of the Scribes, than in the words of the

Law :

Law : And we are not to think that the written Law is the Foundation, but the unwritten ; and the words of the Elders are of more Anthority and weight, than the words of the Prophets : So blind was their Zeal for their Traditions, that one of the Rabbies being once cast into Prison, and Water being given him to wash, and to drink, and the greater part of it being spilt, he rather chose to wash his hands, than to drink, saying, *'Tis better to die, than to transgress the Tradition of the Elders.* And no wonder that they were thus concerned, when it was by these Doctrines that they kept up an absolute Authority over the People ; for if the People would be made to believe, that the unwritten Law was of greater consequence than the written, and that the Scribes were the Guardians and Oracles of the unwritten Law, nothing could be better contrived, to keep them in an absolute dependance upon the Scribes.

2. The Charge doth likewise imply an universal regard of these Traditions in the People: *Why do thy disciples transgress the traditions ? (i. e.)* Why do they only do it : And we heard from St. Mark, that *the Pharises, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not :* Whatever became

of the Commandments of God, here was very good care taken, that the Traditions of the Church should be kept. Nay, it was so fixed in the minds of our Lord's Disciples themselves, that they were to be kept, that it was not easie to set them right in these things presently; for after our Saviour had told them, *not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man, but that which cometh out of the mouth*, v. 11. Peter asked him, v. 15. to declare the meaning of the Parable, or as he thought it, hard saying: And Jesus said, v. 16. *Are ye also yet without understanding?* And so he goes on, shewing that he spake of cleanness of mind, which was defiled by *evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, &c.* They had not yet got rid of those Superstitious Fancies that reigned amongst the People, and were so prejudiced by them, that they could hardly understand the plain truth on the other side. Nay, when after this, he had occasion to say to them, as you find in the next Chapter, *ver. 6. Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharises, and of the Sadduces*: How do we think they understood this saying? *And they reasoned among themselves, saying, it is because we have taken no bread.* Which shewed, they were not yet cured of this

this Pharisaical Superstition ; inasmuch as they understood our Saviour, as if he had forbidden them to eat any bread which the Pharises had touched, as the Pharises would eat nothing that had been touched by a Gentile; when all that our Saviour meant, was, that they should *beware of their Doctrine*. And no wonder that these Traditionary Inventions had taken such root in the minds of Men, when they did not serve more for the Authority of the Guides, than for the ease and liberty of the People that followed them : For though it was something a nice and elaborate business to observe all the Traditions, yet this was much more grateful, not only to fancy, but to flesh and blood, than to observe the Rules of true Piety, by keeping the Commandments of God ; For instance, though it was something troublesome to be washing at every turn, yet if this would keep a Man's Mind clean, it was a much easier care, than to keep the *heart pure*, v. 19. from *evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witnessings, and evil speakings*, which according to our Saviour's Doctrine, were the things that *defile the man*, v. 20. How was it possible, but that People should be fond of believing such a conclusion as this,

whoſeever lives in the Land of *Iſrael*, and eateth his meat in cleannels, and ſpeaks in the Holy Tongue, and Morning and Evening ſays over his *Phylacteries*, let him never doubt, but he ſhall obtain Life in the World to come. This was the Doctrine of the Maſters, and certainly they muſt be very unreaſonable People, that could not be content to go to Heaven upon ſuch terms as theſe, if they could be made ſuch Fools as to believe it: And truly Men are very apt to hearken to ſuch Follies, becauſe they ſave them the labour of being truly good. No wonder therefore that the Scribes were ſo univerſally believed and obeyed by the People, inas-much as they undertook to carry them all to Heaven infallibly, by ſuch flight and cheap performances, as were required by their Tradition: And in ſuch a caſe as this, it would coſt more than ordinary pains to undeceive them; our Saviour himſelf being conſtrained to repeat his Inſtructions over and over again to his Diſciples, to get theſe Fancies out of their heads. And thus much concerning the nature of that Charge which the Pharifees laid againſt our Lord's Diſciples, and concerning that which is implied in it, the zeal of the Priests, and the Scribes for their Traditions,

Traditions, and the fondness of the People that were addicted to them. I proceed now to the

2. Point : And that is the Answer which our Saviour made to this Charge, viz. *Why do ye also transgress the Commandment of God by your Tradition ?* Which doth of itself appear to be a plain and wise way of answering their bold Question, because it turned the difficulty upon them, and that a thousand times a greater difficulty, to say, if they could, by what Authority they advanced their Traditions against the Law of God, and since they thought it was so heinous a fault in the Disciples, *not to observe their Traditions*, to purge themselves if they were able, of a notorious fault in *keeping* their Traditions, and teaching them to others ; inasmuch as their Traditions could not be kept without transgressing the commandment of God. Which general Charge our Saviour makes good also, by one particular inference so plain, that there was no fencing against it : *For God*, says he, *commanded, saying, Honour thy Father and thy Mother ; and he that curseth Father or Mother, let him die the death : But ye say, whosoever shall say to his Father, or his Mother, it is a gift, by whatsoever*

*thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his Father and his Mother, he shall be free: thus have you made the Commandment of God of none effect, by your Tradition.* The Tradition was this, that if a Man had vowed never to relieve, or to give any thing to such or such a Person, though it were his Father or his Mother, he was held by his Vow, and if afterwards he should change his mind, and be willing to relieve his Parents, and in order thereunto, go to the Priests to be dispensed with, and absolved of his Vow, the Priests should challenge all that he now designed to relieve his Parents withal, but of his Vow he could not be released, and the Money was put into the Treasury of the Temple; so that if his Father or Mother came afterwards to him, and asked an Alms of him, he might say, *It is Corban,* or devoted to the Service of the Temple, whatsoever I can have a mind to give thee; and in St. Mark our Saviour concludes, *And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his Father, or his Mother:* For they held him to his Vow, and whatever Money he could be willing to give them afterwards, being under the Religion of a Vow, it became Sacred, and was to go to the Temple: In which  
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most wicked Tradition they had their Ends; for the Wealth of the Treasury being partly employed in the Reparation of the Temple, partly for the Relief of the Poor, partly for the enriching of the Priests and Levites, the Pharises who were no small part of the Priests, had their share in all that was brought into the Treasury. By this Traditionary Doctrine and Practice, they had eluded a Law of God not of lesser moment, but of so great moment, that the transgression of it was capital, and such a Law too, as the light of Nature shews no less, than the written word of God; and therefore well might our Saviour conclude, Thus have ye made the Commandment of God of none effect by your Tradition: But if it be now asked, why our Saviour did not keep to that instance which the Pharises produced, and answer to that, but rather chose another instance? The account of this I think very easie, *viz.* That he saw it was necessary to run them down by one of the most undeniable instances that could be imagined, of their contradicting the Law of God by their Traditions? for the boldness of the Pharises and Priests was so excessive, and the fondness of the People about these Traditions



ditions was so hard to be broken, that it was necessary to make way for their conviction by such an argument, as must needs make some impression upon them; And when he had made an end of that, he did not forget to speak directly to the point they had begun withal; for *ver. 10.* we find that he called the multitude, and said unto them, *Hear and understand*, not that which goeth into the Mouth defileth a Man, but that which cometh out of the Mouth defileth a Man; that is, do not suffer your selves to be deluded by these confident Men, who use their Authority to that degree, as to carry you under a pretence of keeping their Traditions, to the transgression of the plainest Commandments of God, as I have evidently shewn in the case of the Fifth Commandment; and now be willing to be instructed in that other point of pretended Tradition which they blame my Disciples for not observing, and know that no Food whatsoever is unclean, or unlawful in its own nature to be used, nor can any Man's touch make it so, nor can any of these things defile a Man's Conscience; but a Mans Conscience is defiled by that which comes from his heart, by evil Thoughts, by evil Words, and by Acti-

ons contrary to the Command of God, such as *murders, and adulteries, &c.* These are the things that defile a man, but to eat with unwashen hands, defileth not a man: (i. e.) doth not by any means affect his Soul, or his Conscience, for in this respect he is neither better for washing, nor worse for letting it alone; and to think otherwise is a Superstition hurtful to your selves, and dishonourable to God, and of very bad consequence though it be not so impudent and notorious an abuse, as the making void of God's Law, by the other leud Tradition that I mentioned before: It is to this purpose that we are to understand the method and design of our Saviour's Discourse in this place, in answer to the Objection of the Pharisees brought against the Disciples.

From which answer there are some things to be gathered well worth our observation.

1. That it is sufficient to overthrow the Authority of a pretended Tradition, that it is contrary to the Commandment of God.

2. That if there be one Traditionary Doctrine that notoriously contradicts the Law of God, that one instance is sufficient to overturn the credit of that Tradition, which pretends to deliver unwritten Doctrines,

doctrines of equal Authority with those that are written.

3. That the universal consent of some one Age or more, that such and such Doctrines were delivered by word of mouth many Ages before, is no argument that they were so delivered.

4. That we have a great reason to stick to the word of God delivered to us in the Scriptures ; and to examine all Doctrines and Rules which are said to be necessary to Salvation, by that Rule, and to reject the Authority of unwritten Traditions.

1. That it is sufficient to overthrow the Authority of a pretended Tradition, that it is contrary to the Commandment of God : For if when Tradition is pretended for any Doctrine or Practice, it be not enough to shew, that the same Doctrine or Practice is inconsistent with what is plainly required in the Scriptures, which are acknowledged by all to contain the word of God ; I say, if this be not enough, then our Saviour used an insufficient Argument against the pretended Tradition of not suffering the Son that was under a Vow of the contrary, to relieve his Father or Mother, that it made void the Commandment of God. But doubtless our Saviour was so far from using a bad Argument,

Argument, that he used the best and most convincing of all: And truly if we did not in this case consider our Saviour's Authority, yet it must be a monstrous prejudice, that keeps any Man from discerning the strength of this Argument, against the Authority of any unwritten Doctrine, that it is contrary to what is written; for nothing is more certain, than that Contradictions cannot be true, and yet they must be true, if that Doctrine for which unwritten Tradition is pretended, can be of God, though it contradicts the written Tradition, which is by all acknowledged to be Divine. But as plain as this Argument is, yet it is very well for us that we find our blessed Saviour giving such Authority to it; because there are Christians in the World, bearing up themselves upon the Tradition of the Church, that are loth to admit this Argument; which we have no cause to be amazed at, because it is an utter Confutation of all their pretences. We charge them with having brought into the Church new Articles of Faith, and new Doctrines of Worship, which are not only very different from what was taught at first by Christ and his Apostles, but some of them contrary thereunto, as we can shew them out of the Scriptures.

Scriptures. But this way of proceeding doth by no means content them, and they insist upon it, that the Cause may be tried otherwise. For say they, You acknowledge that our Church was once a pure Church, and taught the Gospel sincerely; but if as you say, she departed from the pure Faith and Worship which the Apostles left, it is impossible but this must have been very notorious, because it could not have been done without opposition and resistance from some that must needs observe it: Tell us therefore, when were these new and false Doctrines introduced? Who were the Men that brought them in? Who were the first that made the discovery? What Council condemned them, after they were discovered? For if none of these things can be shewn, it is absurd to think, that any such alteration should have been as you say. Which reasoning amounts to thus much, that it is impossible we can be sure that in the compass of a thousand Years, there was a great alteration happened in the state of Religion, unless withal we can tell how it came about, and just when it came about, the precise time, and the punctual manner and circumstances thereof, which is just as if a Man almost desperately sick of a Disease

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disease, that had been for some Years grow-  
 ing upon him, should prove to his Friend,  
 that he is as well as ever he was in his Life;  
 for says he, You know I was well once,  
 and if I am now so ill, as you say, pray  
 shew me the time when this Disease  
 first happened, the manner how, and  
 what Physitians were called about me;  
 which kind of arguing would certainly  
 prove no more, than that the Disease  
 had taken his head. When the Servants  
 came and told their Lord, that the *tares*  
*came up with the wheat*, it was excusea-  
 ble in them to say, *We sowed good seed,*  
*whence hath it these tares?* But when  
 their Master told them *An enemy hath done*  
*this*, if they had disputed, and told him,  
 It was impossible there should be any Tares  
 at all, because he could not tell punctu-  
 ally that very Night when they were  
 sown, and who the Persons were, that  
 took the malicious pains to sow them;  
 then they had been very inexcusable thus  
 to renounce their own certain knowledge,  
 for the sake of a vain Speculation. Now  
 we are very sure that the Apostles did at  
 first sow nothing in the Church, but good  
 and true Doctrine: Our Fathers that  
 lived about fourteen hundred Years af-  
 ter, found quite another sort of Doctrine  
 gotten

gotten into the Church, and some of them contrary to what the Apostles taught, as the Scriptures manifestly shew; and yet there have been a long time, and still there are certain Disputers, that go about to stagger others, with such like questions as we have been speaking of, and teach them to despise all reasoning out of the Scriptures, till these questions are satisfied; What Age, What Year of our Lord, were these Errours brought into the Church? Who were they that brought them in, and who first complained of them? Now although a very reasonable account both may be, and hath been given of the Persons, the Time, and the Manner, and the Degrees, by which such Corruptions got into the Church, yet it is very unreasonable to expect that every Christian should be able to answer these Questions punctually, because it requires more Labour and reading, than generally they have either leisure or ability to go through with; but withal it is very needless, because there is a shorter and a surer way to determine this matter, and that by comparing those Doctrines and Practices with the Scriptures: For the Scriptures have a more certain Tradition, than any of those Histories that give

an account of the Revolutions of Church Affairs since the beginning; and now what matter is it, if I am assured that such and such Corruptions were brought into the Church, some time or other after the Apostles, because they are contrary to what the Apostles taught and left in their Writings, though I cannot tell just the Year when, or the Person by whom they first crept into the Church. I would very fain know of any Man, that when our Saviour set himself to overthrow that wicked Tradition, which we were speaking of before, whether he could not, if he had pleased, have given an exact account of the Persons that began it in the *Jewish* Church, and of the time when it began, and of every circumstance that attended its entrance into the World, and its growth and encrease afterwards. But did he go this way to work? It is certain that the Pharises pretended the Traditions which they taught the People, were delivered from God to *Moses*, and that through several Ages, they were conveyed down to them successively by word of Mouth. And I grant that if our Lord had with many words shewn them, that they were such and such Men, who first brought them in, this had been a confutation of  
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their pretence ; but for all that, he was pleased to use a better and a shorter argument against them, and told them what the Commandment was in the Law, which their pretended Tradition made void, and this was instead of a thousand Arguments, that their Doctrine never came from *Moses*, but was invented some time afterwards : And I beseech you let none of us be ashamed to use that kind of argument, which our Saviour thought fit to confute those People withal, and which we have reason to think he used, that he might shew us the best way to secure our selves from being imposed upon by unwritten Traditions, and by a pretence of having received such Doctrines from the Apostles, as they never delivered. When therefore we are asked, If *Transubstantiation* be an Errour, and not an Article of Faith, when did it come in ? If *Service in an unknown Tongue* be an Innovation, when did it come in ? If the *Sacrifice of the Mass* be a Corruption, when did it come in ? Let us account it sufficient to answer, for so our Saviour thought it in the like case, That Transubstantiation makes void those places of Scripture, which expressly affirm, that by eating of *Bread* we shew forth the Death

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of Christ, and are made partakers of his Body: That *Service in an unknown tongue* makes void the Fourteenth Chapter of the First Epistle to the *Corinthians*: And that the *Sacrifice of the Mass* makes void the Seventh and the Tenth Chapters of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, which expressly tell us, that Christ can be offered no more, and that *there remains no more Sacrifice for sins*; and therefore we are very well assured, that they did come in sometime or other, since the Apostles, but whether they came in sooner or later is nothing to the purpose, for certainly nothing ought ever to have come in, that makes void any part of the Word of God; but if any such thing hath got in, there is all the reason in the World that it should be thrown out again. They may well be ashamed, that cannot bear this sort of arguing, but most certainly we have no reason to be ashamed to use it, since our blessed Saviour hath used it before us; for when he set himself to overthrow the credit of these Doctrines, for which they pretended a constant Tradition in the Church, he thought it sufficient for his purpose, to shew that they voided the Commandments of God and made his word of none effect.

2. If there be one Traditionary Doctrine that notoriously contradicts the written Word of God, 'tis enough to overthrow the whole Credit of that Tradition which pretends to bring down unwritten Doctrines, that are necessary to be received. For thus we find, that our Saviour by the single instance of that Tradition, which voided the Fifth Commandment, overthrew the Objection of the Pharisees against his Disciples: *Why do thy Disciples transgress the Tradition of the Elders?* (i. e.) their unwritten Traditions: which was as much as to say, that they ought all of them to be Religiously observed, because they had all the same Authority: Our Saviour therefore produces an instance of their Traditions, that takes away all Authority, inasmuch as it was a plain contradiction to the Law of God; if therefore amongst their unwritten Doctrines and Rules, there were any that had some kind of goodness and usefulness, they were to be regarded upon their own account, and not upon the Authority of Tradition. But when he had utterly overthrown all that pretended Authority by an undeniable Argument, he then speaks to the case, which themselves had propounded, and lays down the truth concerning it.

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They had a vast number of Superstitions, for which they pretended Tradition, and they tax our Saviour's Disciples for not observing one of them. Now he with admirable wisdom first breaks the Authority of their Tradition, shewing that one of them was plainly against the Law of God, and then he shews how Superstitious and foolish they were in the case which themselves chose to speak to. In this also our Lord hath set us an example, that if we are prest by a pretence to Tradition in favour of unwritten Doctrines and Articles, we should in the first place shew that one or more of these is contrary to the word of God; and therefore that there is no reason to pretend Tradition for any of them, since they are all said to have come down together: Which being done in the first place, it will be then seasonable to shew, what is to be thought of the rest, if they are judged of by the general Rules of Reason and Scripture.

3. The Universal consent of some one or two Ages that such and such Doctrines were delivered by word of mouth many Ages before, is no Argument that they were so delivered. The Pharisees did pretend that their Doctrines and Interpretations of the Law had been conveyed

down from *Moses* by Oral Tradition to that Age in which they lived, and there were several of these Traditions universally believed in that Age to have been so conveyed, and the Practice of the People was universally governed by them: For instance, that of Religious *Washing before meat*, and the *washing of Cups and Pots*, as a thing in it self good and holy, was universally received and Practised, as *St. Mark* tells us. Now I would fain know whether they might not have reasoned in this fashion: We in this Age received this Doctrine and Rule from our Forefathers, who professed they received it from theirs, and if they had not received it from theirs, then they all agreed together to cheat us, as their Forefathers agreed to cheat them, if they had not received it from theirs, and so this Tradition must have come originally from *Moses*, or else there was one Age that agreed to cheat the next in things concerning the Service of God, and the Salvation of Mens Souls. But after all the prettiness of this demonstration, I think, we have more reason to believe, that this Superstition never came from *Moses*, be cause our Saviour exposed it as a vain and foolish Doctrine, than to believe that

that it did, because the Jews ever since the Pharises time, who were a Sect of full three hundred years standing were taught to pretend Tradition for the Innovations of the Pharises, and for this amongst the rest. And therefore it is a vain thing to pretend, that because such and such Traditionary Doctrines were in such an Age taught without controul, as necessary to Salvation, they must needs have been taught so from the very first.

4. That we have great reason to stick to the word of God delivered to us in the Holy Scriptures, and to examine all Doctrines and Pretences by this Rule. For the Holy Scriptures are indeed the Rule whereby we are to try that pretence, that there is another Rule, *viz.* of unwritten Tradition; and if that other pretended Rule doth in any thing contradict the Scriptures, most certainly it is but a pretended Rule, and to be rejected. To deal plainly, this same plain Oral Tradition was never pretended for any good, either by Jews or Christians; nor made use of but to advance and protect some Doctrines or Practices, that stand condemned by the Scriptures: And therefore after so long experience had of the mischief, as well as vanity of this pretence, it were perhaps not

unreasonable for any Christian to reject the Argument of unwritten Tradition without any more ado, and to entertain no Doctrine or Practice necessary to Salvation, which cannot be proved out of the Scriptures, nor to entertain any thing at all, that is contrary thereunto, let Men talk of Tradition, or any other Authority, as long as they please.

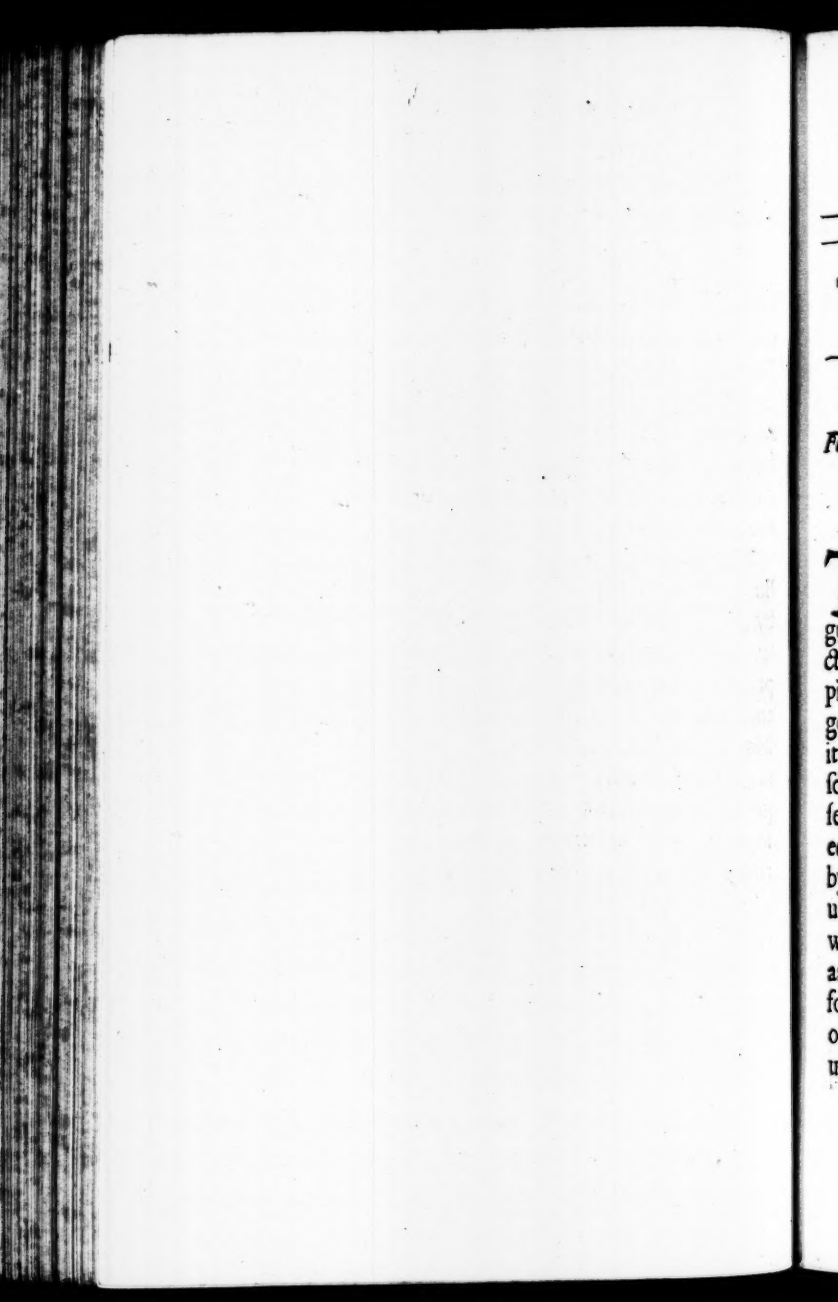
And now I question not, but this Discourse will be acknowledged to be very plain and convincing ; but for all that, it is not certain, that the Argument of it self will secure us from being deceived by the Sophistry of others, if we do not take heed to the main thing of all, and that is, to lead such Lives as the Scriptures direct us to lead, for there is no such temptation in the World to be fond of Traditionary Doctrines, as to live in that manner, that if the Traditionary Doctrines be not true, we can have no hope of Salvation. If we will live according to the Scriptures, we shall have no temptation, and I am sure we have no reason to believe otherwise, than according to the Scriptures: Let us often think that *here we have no continuing place*, we must not always live here, but that in a very little time, we are to go into another World, and to appear before

before our judge : Let us remember, that this is the great argument, by which the Scriptures engage us to live a *sober, righteous, and godly life*, and let us consider that it is the strongest Argument in the World, and be perswaded by it to do accordingly, and this will above all things establish us in the Truth. It is something hard to keep that Man from being deceived, who needs the comfort of false Principles : For Men are very apt to be running for comfort, where it is to be had, though they cheat themselves for it.

Brethren, the Holy Scriptures are God's Book, and they are acknowledged to be so, by all Christians in the World, therefore I say it again and again, stick to the Scriptures, live according to the Scriptures, and believe according to the Scriptures : Make the Scriptures the Rule of your Practice, and then you will need no more arguments to make them the Rule of your Faith : *And as many, as walk according to this Rule, Peace will be upon them.*

T H E





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## The Eighth Sermon.

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I COR. XI. 19.

*For there must be Heresies also amongst you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.*

**T**HE word *Heresie* did at first indifferently signifie any party distinguished from others by Opinions and Practices peculiar to it self, whether those Opinions were true or false, those Practices good or bad; insomuch that Christianity it self was called a *Sect* or *Heresie* for some time. But in time it came to be used in the worser sense, and was restrained to those, that distinguished themselves by the profession of false Doctrines or by unjustifiable Practices: Which use of the word began soon after Christianity, as far as I can find; and there was this reason for it, that Christianity having established one *Form of Doctrine*, which was to be universally received, there were now to be

be no Heresies or Sects, that is, no departure from the Unity of that Doctrine; and every new Sect from that time forward must necessarily be in the wrong: Thus also the word *Schism* or *Division* came in a little time to be restrained to that side or party, by whose fault the breach of Christian Communion and Concord was made; and although, when a dissention, and breach of Unity happens, they that are not in the fault are at the same distance from those that are, that the faulty are from the innocent, yet the faulty were only said to be in Schism or Division: Moreover, it seems that Heresie and Schism were words at first used indifferently to signify the same fault of discord and contention, because breach of Charity and Communion, was for the most part made by departing from Unity of Doctrine, though in process of time, Heresie was restrained to signify an Error about the Faith, and Schism a breach of Order, and Christian Communion. St. Paul doth in this place seem to mean the same thing by both words, for in the foregoing verse, says he, *I hear that there be Divisions or Schisms among you, and I partly believe it*; that is, I believe it of some

some of you. And there he adds, *For there must be also Heresies among you*; that is, Sects and Parties distinguished from one another by their peculiar Doctrines and Practices.

The matter about which there was a disagreement in the Church of *Corinth*, was no less, than that of the administration of the Holy Communion, that having happened so early, which in the latter Ages of the Church has obtained in a much higher degree, that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which was in great part instituted to unite the Faithful in one Body, was perverted into an occasion of dividing them from one another: Upon which observation *St. Paul* inserted this memorable saying:

*There must be also Heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest.*

There must be *Heresies* (*i. e.*) Parties that will contend for false Doctrines and unlawful Practices, that will either take away from the Faith, or add to the Faith, that will either dispense with the Commandments of God, or *teach for Doctrines the Commandments of men.*

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There must be Heresies among you ; that is, this must happen in the Church it self : *Men should arise from among themselves speaking perverse things* : And thus also St. Peter foretold, *There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable Heresies*, 2 Pet. 2. 1. But it was impossible they should do it privily or sily, if they were not of the Church, and had not thereby an opportunity, under a pretence of Piety , and care of Christian Truth, to slip their Innovations into the Church by degrees: Where as it is added, *That they which are approved may be made manifest* ; the meaning is, that honest Men may more and more appear to be what they are.

So that in the words of the Text, there are these Two things observable.

- I. The unavoidableness of Heresies in the Church, *There must be Heresies among you.*
- II. The reason why God is pleased to permit Heresies, *that they who are approved may be made manifest.*

1. The unavoidableness of Heresies in the Church, *There must be Heresies among*

you. By which we are not to understand an absolute necessity, that Heresies should arise: For this is inconsistent with that liberty of human Nature, which Religion, and God's dealing with Mankind in giving us Laws, and making us to expect a Day of Judgment, do necessarily suppose: but the meaning is this, that all things considered, it was in it self highly probable that Heresies would be brought into the Church, and that God certainly foresaw that they would come in, Men being left to that liberty, which is capable of being abused, and under that Grace that may be resisted. All therefore, that is needful to be considered under this head, will be this, what are the grounds of that probability of the coming in of Heresies, which the Text supposes, of Heresies (I say) which God saw would certainly come to pass, if he interposed not his irresistible power to prevent it.

Now it was not to be expected, but that Heresies would be, if we consider on the one side the revelation of Christian Truth, and on the other, the Temper and Circumstances of Mankind.

I. As

1. As to the Revelation of Christian Truth, we are to consider the tendency and design of the Doctrine it self, and the evidence we have that God hath revealed it.

1. The spirit and design of the Doctrine of Christianity, which is plainly to rectifie the ill Manners, and the corrupt Affections of Mankind, to restrain them from Liberties, which most Men desire, how unreasonable and hurtful soever they are, and to tie them up to Rules, that are not grateful to flesh and blood. Moreover, the Doctrine of Christianity truly represented, is equally for the interest of all Mankind, and is by no means framed to serve the designs of Ambition, and to advance one part of the Church, to the prejudice and slavery of all the rest. Lastly, It teaches a Worship of great simplicity, that has but very few Mysteries, and nothing of that Pomp and Ceremony, which is so pleasing to the Senses and the Fancies of Men, and will not suffer them to place the weight of Religion in any outward Shows and Performances, but *in loving the Lord our God with all our heart; and our neighbours as our selves*: And to such a course of life and temper of mind it obligeth us  
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by all that it teaches concerning God and Christ, and a Life to come, our Creed serving no other turn, but to make it necessary for us to live a *sober, righteous, and godly life*. But then

2. The evidence we have for the truth of this Doctrine, and that God hath revealed it, is not so irresistible, as to over-rule all contradiction and perverseness, though it be sufficient to satisfy a wise and honest Man; nor is the manner wherein these things are testified and declared to us, so inlightning, as to make it absolutely impossible for a Man to mistake about them, or for those that wilfully pervert them, to delude others with putting false colours upon them; although it is so plain, that we must be extraordinarily to blame, if we run into any Error against sound Faith or good Life. One would think the Doctrine of the Resurrection had been plainly enough delivered, first by our Saviour, then by his Apostles, and that the Institution of the Lord's Supper, and the Order which the Apostles observed in the Administration of it was also plain enough, and yet in this very Church of *Corinth*, there were divers foully mistaken as to the one, and



still wanted instruction as to the other. One would think that those words, *This is my body*, were sufficiently plain, and that there was not the least need for our Lord to have added presently after that saying, *But take notice that I mean, This is my body by deputation or representation, or in a figurative sense*, any more then to have so explained himself, when he said, *I am the door, I am the vine, &c.* But yet because he did not think fit to leave an express caution against the literal sense of these words, we know it has been insisted upon against plain evidence of Scripture, Sense, and Reason. Again, let a Man consider the Institution of the Holy Communion, and have no prejudice upon his mind, and he will never desire that it should have been more plainly expressed, that the Cup be administered to all, than it is, especially since it is said of the Cup, *Drink ye All of this*, and *they All drank of it* : But yet because these words were not added, or the like, *And let no man ever presume to administer the Bread, without administering the Cup to the same Person*, the Cup hath been taken away from the People, for the greater reverence of Administration. When *St. Paul* said, that he that understands not

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the Language in which Prayer, or giving of Thanks is made, is not edified, it could hardly have been thought necessary to have added this, *Let therefore all Forms of Publick Prayer and Administration of Sacraments in all Ages of the Church be made in the Tongue, that the People understand*: And yet for want of some such conclusion, Publick Prayers have been made in a Language, that the People understand not, and the Practice maintained as confidently, as if the fourth Chapter of the first Epistle to the *Corinthians* were it self in a Language, that we could not understand. There is no question but God could have added such explications and cautions in the Scripture, as would have made it a great deal more difficult and troublesome to bring in those Errours, than it hath been, and perhaps utterly impossible to maintain them amongst Christians without destroying the Bible out of the World: But then by the same reason that such cautions had been necessary, thousand times as many more had been necessary too: For so many Additions by way of caution must have been made, as there are ways of eluding, and perverting a Rule; which are so many, that to have provided expre-

ly against them all, would have made the Bible a more voluminous Book than any is in the World; not to say the most odd and uncouth Book that ever was seen. For whoever wrote or spoke in that manner, as to provide against all possible ways of being mistaken, or having his words perverted; According to this rate, a Man must not expect to make an end of a sentence in an hour, and when he has done all he can, his explanations may be perverted too: And therefore we are not to wonder, if God has not provided express Cautions against all possible Mistakes and Abuses of this nature, but thought good to leave a Rule of Faith, and Manners, and Worship, which would be sufficient to guide all honest persons, and lovers of Truth, though not sufficient to exclude all Cavil and Abuse.

For this reason it was, that our Saviour did not pretend, that all who saw his Works, and heard his Doctrines must necessarily believe in him; but he required constantly a certain temper of mind, consisting of Humility, Sincerity, love of the Truth, and in a word, *A good and honest Heart*, in order to a Man's being his true Disciple: Common Sense and

Reason

Reason was not sufficient for this purpose, but there must be also a peculiar Probity, or teachable Spirit, a Mind ready to believe all Truth, and to do all Duty : These were the *Sheep* that would *hear his Voice*, and the *Ground* that would *receive his Seed*, and *bring forth Fruit* : Such were the Men that would *hear and understand*, and *know of the Doctrine whether it were of God*. But as for others, they would make a shift to reject it with some colour for so doing, or to pervert it, if they once admitted it.

This was the first thing to be considered, the temper and design of the Gospel, which delivers Truth, that does by no means gratifie the Lusts of Men, or please their Imaginations, or serve the interest of particular persons, to the disadvantage of all others ; and then that this Truth was delivered in that way, which though it be apt to instruct and convince all honest Men, yet will not infallibly bear down a spirit of Contradiction. Now to this we must add,

2. The consideration of the general temper of Mankind, for whose sake the Gospel was made known, *viz.* that it is very corrupt and exceedingly prone to Sin, and therefore to Errour, impatient of

true Vertue and Piety, and therefore of true Doctrine; Humane nature does affect a lawless Liberty, and cannot well bear to be confined, and it is so diseased, that it doth not take it well to be healed; it is therefore no wonder if the Remedy which God hath provided, hath been so tampered withal by Men, as to make it ineffectual for that purpose, for which he hath sent it to us; and Doctrines have been taught which give that liberty that Truth denies: It was not to be expected, but that if the Doctrine of Christianity should not effectually overcome those Lusts that reign in the World, those Lusts would corrupt and pervert that Doctrine, and bring in Heresies: Ambition and Covetousness would bring in Heresies for the establishing of a worldly Power and Dominion in the Name of Christ; Licentiousness would bring in Heresies for *making void the Commandments of God*: Pride would bring in Heresies, though for nothing else but a Man's satisfaction and glory in drawing many People into a Party, and becoming the Head of it; and when they were brought in, the natural inconsistency and wavering of some would carry them away from the Truth, the natural stiffness and inflexibility of others would

would detain them in Errour ; the very desire and love of Novelty would at first help to bring in some, and in process of time, the pretence of Antiquity would be every day more and more able to gain others : Finally , the unwillingness of most Men to take pains in the search of Truth, and the greater ease of depending upon the absolute Authority of others would give a farther advantage to Errour, which feares nothing more than an Examination, and therefore discourages all Persons from giving themselves so needless a trouble, since they have the word of those for their security, who cannot possibly mislead them, considering the diseases of Humane Nature, which the Doctrine of Christ doth not cure miraculously and irresistibly, it could not be expected, but there would be Factions and Heresies against the Truth. If therefore it be thought strange that the Apostle should say, *there must be Heresies* : Let us consider, that this is no more than if he had said, after all the care that God hath taken to restore Mankind, there will be Pride and Ambition, there will be Covetousness and Injustice, and the Love of this World, there will be Luxury and Licentiousness, there will be both Inconstancy

and Stiffneckedness, there will be Laziness and Slothfulness, and Unaptness for Instruction, and therefore there must be Heresies; for God hath provided no infallible Remedies against Sin and Wickedness, and as certainly as the Vices of the World would break out in the Church, so certainly would Errours get into it by degrees, and usurp the Name and Authority of Truth. + 'Tis true, that God if he pleased could absolutely have hindered it by his overruling Power: But in this saying it is implied, that he would not do so, and Experience has shewn, that he has not done so, and we have no reason to wonder at it, since he is not pleased to make all Men good by an irresistible Grace; and there was less reason to expect that he should make all Men Orthodox by an irresistible Illumination.

And so I come to the second point: Which concerns the reason assigned why God is pleased to permit Heresies. *That they which are approved may be made manifest, (i. e.)* that it may most evidently appear who are sincere and honest, and who are not so; for opposition to the Truth, and the ways that are taken to advance Errour, do prove what Men are at the bottom, and distinguish between those

those that would appear all alike, if the same Truth were equally professed by all: The great difference that breaks out, is that between the probity of some Men on the one side, and the falseness and hypocrisy of others on the other side, which appears in these instances:

1. In a more diligent search after Truth, which is the effect Heresies have upon honest and godly Men, while they give occasion to Hypocrites to consider what is most for their ease, their safety, their advantage in this World; whilst the several parties of Christians are each of them eagerly contending for their own ways, Men of honesty and sincerity find themselves obliged to examine their own persuasions more narrowly, and to compare one thing with another more carefully, so that if they apprehend a mistake in themselves, they quit it without any more to do, and come to establish themselves in the Truth upon better grounds than they had before, and are better able to lead others into it.

2. By this means also the constancy of sincere persons in the profession of the Truth is manifested: For where there is no opposition there can be no trial of that Love to the Truth, which will not suffer



a Man to forsake it ; and this not only because a Man's stedfastness cannot be proved, but by opposition and temptation, but likewise because they are but few good Men in comparison, who would be at the pains of a diligent Examination of their own persuasions, if contrary Doctrines were not advanced, they would rely mostly upon the Consent and Authority of others, instead of believing Truth upon its proper Grounds and Arguments : but if, as I said in the first instance, the spreading of Heresies puts them upon a diligent search after the reasons of Truth, their stedfastness in it afterwards is manifested to be the true Vertue of Constancy which does not consist in an obstinate resolution not to change our Opinion, let what will be produced against it, but in adhering to that which appears to be true, after the most diligent examination of all that can be said against it. And thus Heresies make good Men more constant in the Truth, by giving them an opportunity of confirming themselves in it by better Arguments, and clearer Evidence, and they manifest their constancy to the World, inasmuch, as the Adversaries of Truth are never wanting to shake the stedfastness

stedfastness of true Believers by all ways of temptation imaginable.

3. Their Charity to others is manifested also by means of Heresies and Opposition to the Truth ; for here is occasion given to shew their care of one another in satisfying the doubtful, in instructing the ignorant , in giving caution to the confident, and encouragement to the weak, all which are noble instances of Christian Charity : But this is not all, since their care to recover others from the way of Errour, to reduce those that are gone aside , together with their enduring contradiction, their instructing in much patience, their meekness towards those that oppose themselves, are likewise manifested upon all such occasions.

4. Their sincerity does likewise appear in another respect, *viz.* of defending Truth with Truth only, and a good cause by Innocence and honest means, without making use of Frauds, of Lies, of false Accusations, of false Principles, of unconcluding Arguments, of any disingenious Arts, without making advantage of the weakness and mistakes of others ; which one thing makes a vast difference between those that are honest, and those that are not : All which instances do express the truth

truth of that reason, for which God has still suffered Heresies to be in the Church, *That they which are approved may be made manifest; (i. e.)* that their love of the Truth, and their diligence in enquiring after it, that their constancy in professing it, that their charity to those that are, and to those that are not misled, and their sincerity and ingenuity in asserting Truth, and appearing for it by none, but lawful methods, and just arguments, may appear to the World; which as it is for the praise of good Men, so there are other benefits arising from it; for instance,

1. That the belief of true Doctrine comes hereby to be established upon better and firmer grounds, than in all likelihood had been discovered, if Opposition had not obliged honest Men to dig the deeper for them; and this we have noted already.

2. That by the way many profitable Truths come to be discovered, which had otherwise lain hid: The Scriptures come to be better understood, and the more obscure passages of it to be reasonably well interpreted, all which is for the advantage of the Church of God. Opposition whets the Industry, and sets an edge upon the Wit of all Men, good  
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and bad; and whilst bad Men are concerned to find out all the ways of supporting Errour, the good and honest are no less employed to arm themselves with all the advantages of Truth, and therefore cannot fail of arriving at greater Skill in the things of God, and a greater compass of understanding in Divine matters, than if they had not been constrained to countermine the approaches of Errour.

*Lastly*, The Duty that is incumbent upon all Men of Honesty and Sincerity, to maintain the Profession of the pure Doctrine of the Gospel against all Heresies whatsoever, shews them also the necessity of recommending true Opinions to the World by more Orthodox lives, by walking more warily, and circumspectly, by setting better Examples of all kinds of Vertue and Piety, by shewing the force and efficacy of true Doctrine, to make Men live *soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World*: And when God suffers Heresies to prevail most in the Church, 'tis a loud call to all that are Friends of Truth and goodness, to justify his Cause by the strongest Arguments, and the best Lives.

And

*The Eighth Sermon.*

And now he is something to blame, that will not acknowledge these two things to follow from what has been said.

1. That Heresies and Schisms are no objection against the Providence of God.

2. That they are no objection against the Truth and Goodness of a Church.

1. That they are no objection against the Providence of God, since they have their good use and consequence, for which he is pleased to permit them, and this especially to try the Honesty of Men, and to shew what they are to the World, which will in the end make extreamly for the advantage of Truth; and commonly the more Heresies there are, the more certainly is this Trial made: In the mean while it is not to be dissembled, that yet diversity of Sects and Parties hath its manifold mischiefs and miseries attending upon it; it breeds scandal to the World, it is the diversion of Atheists and Unbelievers, it nourishes Discords and Animosities, it removes the Contentious farther from the knowledge of the Truth, it makes the Study of good Manners, and the Practice of Holiness and Vertue to be in a great measure forgotten, it lessens the Reverence of Authority, it produces Fraud and Force, Unfaithfulness and Cruelty,

## The Eighth Sermon.

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elty, and has made Men, and which is worse Christians, Foxes and Wolves to one another; so that 'tis not to be denied but Heresies are in themselves, and in their consequences very great Evils; but then they are such Evils, as the Providence of God permits for wise and good Ends, such as I have already mentioned: They have their good consequences as well as their bad ones, and the good that is wrought out of them is weighty enough to overballance the Evil; for the greatest mischief that is discernable in them is but this, that they do effectually draw forth that wickedness which otherwise would have lain more undiscovered in the Hearts of Men; but then also they manifest more clearly that Integrity, that Piety, that Diligence and Constancy, and Vertue, and Charity of good Men, which otherwise had not so much appeared. Bad Men do by means of Heresies grow worse, and the good grow better by them, according to that saying in *Daniel*, Chap. 12. 10. *The wicked shall do wickedly, and shall not understand, but the wise shall understand.* They are hardened, and these are purified, and the difference between Vertue and Sincerity on the one side,

side, and Hypocrisie and Vice on the other is so clearly seen, that the good Examples will at last prevail against the scandal of those that are Evil, and the indirect ways of supporting Error will shew the simplicity and Vertue of the Children of Truth to more advantage than it could possibly have had without the Comparison; so that it will be much more easie for People of honest tempers and dispositions, to discern which is the true Flock of Christ, and to what Communion they are to betake themselves. When our blessed Saviour, and his Apostles planted the Church, things were not so ordered, as to make Profelites of all sorts of Men, however they were qualified, but rather to *gather together the Children of God that were scattered abroad*, that is, all that were of pious and honest Dispositions, and though the mighty Evidence wherewith the Gospel was preached, drew in some that were none of the best; yet either Persecutions or Schisms soon purged the Church of them again; and Heresies seem to have been permitted ever since to carry on the same design of distinguishing between the Good and Bad, and making it appear more evidently, who are the faithful followers of Christ: And

it can by no means be unworthy of the Providence of God, to suffer those Evils to happen, which he makes to work for the same good end, which was designed by that manner, wherein the Gospel was at first revealed.

2. Neither are Schisms and Heresies any objections against the Truth and Goodness of a Church, unless it were always a disparagement to be opposed, and forsaken, which certainly it is not; for otherwise Christianity it self, as it was taught by Christ and his Apostles, must needs have been a false Religion, and the Church which they founded, a false Church; for thence came the *Gnosticks* and *Valentinians*, and I know not how many Heresies more, and the Apostle told the Elders at *Miletum*. Acts 20. 30. That *from themselves would arise men teaching perverse things, that would draw disciples after them*: It is certainly for want of better Arguments, that the Reformation is to be objected against, upon the account of those Parties, into which it is divided; and this Church of *England* for the sake of those Parties, that have broken off from the Communion of it. For as to the latter, it is either no mark of a true Church to hold fast all that were once of

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it, or else the Church of Christ was not that true Church, since many went off from it, and which perhaps they that make this Objection will be more concerned to consider; they from whom so many Nations have broken off, cannot escape their own Censure. As for the Unity of those that keep together in one Profession and Communion, this is no certain mark of Truth, for as Men may be united in Truth, so they may be united in Errour? And all parties have this mark common to them, that so far, as they do not differ, they agree together; and if this be an Argument of Truth, those Parties equally have it, that are most contrary to one another: But 'tis one of the most silly Objections in the World against a common Cause, that is maintained by People that cannot agree in many things, that therefore that Cause is naughty and erroneous, this I say is intolerably vain and impertinent, since this is to make the reason of Truth and Errour to depend upon the uncertain Passions, and the Interests of Men. For by this means 'tis in the power of ill disposed Persons, that for whatever reason may bring in a new Heresie, to make all that Truth which they professed before, to be Truth no longer:

And

And if it be a good Argument against us, it is as good an Argument against Christianity in the general in the Mouth of a *Turk*, or a *Jew*: Christians are so far from being agreed what is true Christianity, that they are fallen into Parties, that have no Religious Communion with one another, and therefore Christianity is a false Religion; nay, it is still a stronger Argument in the Mouth of an Atheist against all Religion whatsoever, since *Christianity*, *Mahometanism*, *Judaism*, and *Paganism*, are at so great a distance from one another. But there needs no other Answer to this Objection, than that which the Texts affords; by which we see that Heresies and Parties were unavoidable, and so far from being an Argument against the truth of Christianity, that God was pleased to permit them, even for the advantage of the Truth: And therefore those that are so offended at the Divisions of the Church, as to take occasion from thence either to throw off the Profession of Religion till all Parties are agreed about it, or to take up with that which pretends to most Unity, without any farther Examination, are hereby demonstrated to be insincere and vicious Persons; for as Heresies are permitted by Providence, *that they which are approv'd,*

so they are permitted, that they which are reprobate, and cannot bear a Tryal, *may be also made manifest*; and it is no loss to the Truth, if she be not found by those that love her not: In the mean time, they that *are of God will hear his Word, and Wisdom will be justified of her Children*: And that we may be found in that number, we are to make it our first and principal Care to avoid the greatest Heresie of all, and the cause of the rest, and that is the Heresie of a wicked Life, and vicious Affections; Then we shall be more and more *built up in our most Holy Faith*, and confirmed, and established in the *Truth, as it is in Jesus*. For as *evil Deeds* make Men *hate the Light*, so if our Deeds be good, and our Consciences pure, we shall love the Light, and rejoyce in it; we shall *buy the Truth and not sell it*; we shall buy it with being at the pains of impartial Enquiry and Consideration, and we shall not sell it for either comfortable, or gainful Errors.

To conclude, God hath in that manner revealed the Truth, which concerns our Salvation, that they may easily be deceived, who are willing to be deceived, but that they who seek it sincerely, shall be sure to find it.

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## The Ninth Sermon.

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2 P E T. I. xix.

*We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.*

**I**N these words St. Peter commendeth Believers, for taking heed, or carefully attending to the Scriptures; and moreover expresseth a weighty reason, why in doing so they did well, because they were *the word of prophecy, and a light shining in a dark place, till the day dawned, and the day-star arose in their hearts.*

I shall first endeavour to explain this reason for the diligent reading of the Scriptures, and shall try to remove those

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Prejudices and Objections, which some Men have thought fit to produce against it ; and lastly, recommend it to your Care and Conscience by earnest Exhortation.

First, As to the Reason itself, we may observe, that the Apostle had in the foregoing Verses, mentioned that Testimony which had been given to Jesus by a Voice from Heaven : *But*, says he, *we have also a more sure word of Prophecy*, (*i. e.*) We have yet a more convincing Testimony of God, that Jesus is the Christ, *viz. The Word of Prophecy* : Again it is said in the following Verses, *That no Prophecy of the Scripture is of private Interpretation* ; or rather of the Prophets own skill and motion ; for so the Original will bear, and the following words require : *For Prophecy came not of old time by the Will of Man but Holy Men spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*. From hence it is plain, that the Apostle speaks of that Testimony, which the Prophecies of the Old Testament give to Jesus, by having foretold those things concerning the *Messias*, which were fulfilled in Jesus, and in him only. So that St. Peter commends the Disciples of

of Christ for their diligent study of *Moses and the Prophets*, because their Writings did abound with those Predictions concerning Christ, which had raised an Expectation of him in the World, before he came, which would clearly demonstrate him to the World, when he should come, and which now were a most convincing Testimony that he was come, and that Jesus, in whom all those Predictions were fulfilled, was he : And that this is the sum of the Apostle's Argument, will appear, by considering these Particulars of the Text.

I. That the Old Testament is said to be *the word of Prophecy*.

II. *A light shining in a dark place, till the day dawned, and the day-star arose in their hearts.*

III. *A sure Word.*

IV. *A more sure word of Prophecy.*

I. That the Old Testament is said to be *the Word of Prophecy*: The Writings of *Moses*, and the *Prophets*, do indeed contain other Matters, and particularly

Histories of Things past, as well as Predictions of Things that were to come; and yet they are called *the Word of Prophecy*. This implieth, that the main design and business of those Holy Books, was to foretel Christ, by those Characters of his Person, and Circumstances of his Appearance, that should demonstrate him afterwards: And though upon other Accounts, the Prophets had their several Arguments of Writing; yet in this they all conspired, as St. Peter told *Cornelius* and his Company: *To him give all the Prophets witness, that whosoever believeth in him, should receive remission of sins*, Acts 8. 43. And this might in great part be made good by producing the clearest Prophecies of all concerning Christ; those which speak directly of him, and of nothing else but those Circumstances, by which he should be known: Of this sort was that Prediction of *Jacob*, that he should come before the final Subversion of the Jewish State: *The Scepter shall not depart from Judah till Shiloh come*: And that of *Daniel's* Seventy Weeks, which punctually fixeth the time of his Manifestation and Sufferings from the *Persian King's* Decree for the Rebuilding the Walls of *Jerusalem*. But besides such Prophecies

phesies as these, there is a great abundance of another sort; such namely, as are mixed with some things, which the Prophets spake of themselves, or others; of which kind that seems to be one instance, which St. Peter with good success alledged to the Jews, Acts 2. 25. *David speaketh concerning him, the Lord is on my right hand, that I should not be moved; therefore did my heart rejoyce, and my tongue was glad: moreover, also my flesh shall rest in hope, because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption.* Now the former Expressions, and indeed the rest of the Psalm might well be applied to David himself, but the latter were too magnificent to be true of him in any good sence; and therefore St. Peter argued from hence in this manner, *Men and Brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his Sepulchre is with us unto this day; therefore being a Prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an Oath unto him, That of the Fruit of his Loins, according to the flesh he would raise up Christ to sit upon his Throne: He seeing this before, spake of the Resurrection of Christ, that his Soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption.*



ption. Now it is no disparagement to these Prophecies, that some passages they are joyned with, were meant of other Persons, as well as of Christ, since it seemeth to me an Argument of the Care of Divine Providence, to fill the Holy Books with Predictions concerning Christ, that are not only diverse Prophecies, which speak entirely of him, and of him only, but upon all fit occasions *the Spirit of Prophecy* broke out into those things which concerned him, and though other matters were begun with, yet if there was any congruity in the subject, it perpetually diverted into this. Hereunto we may add those passages, which in their first meaning signified some things past or present, and yet were designed to prefigure Christ too, such as these, *Out of Egypt have I called my Son*, and *a Bone of him shall not be broken*; the former being first meant of the *Children of Israel*, the latter of the *Paschal Lamb*, both afterwards fulfilled in Christ again, the true Son of God, the true Paschal Lamb. Nay, the Omission of *Melchisedeck's* Descent, Birth, and Death, did at length appear to hint this signification, that Christ, whose Type he was, *had neither beginning of days, nor end of life*: So truly is the Old Testament the

the word of Prophecy, that the very omission of this thing was Prophetical. To conclude this point : The most Illustrious Persons of the Old Testament, as *Moses* and *Aaron*, and *Joshua* and *David*, and *Solomon*, were designed by Divine Providence, to represent before-hand by lively resemblances, what the Messias should be, and what he should do afterwards, and the most memorable passages of the History of the *Israelites*, together with the presence of God in the Tabernacle, and in the Temple, and the whole Frame of the Levitical Service were clear and natural Types of the Messias, and of a more perfect state of things under him, foretelling in Things, as other Prophecies did in Words. The sum of all is this, That there is a vast plenty of Predictions in the Old Testament concerning Christ, and if we will take the pains to examine the Truth of these General Heads, by more particular Enquiries, we shall find that the Affairs of the *Jewish* Nation, and the Writing of the Holy Books, were so over-ruled by the Divine Spirit, that when we come to look into them, we cannot lightly turn our selves any way, but we shall be encountered with some or other prophetic passages concerning Christ. All which  
was

was designed of God for the Confirmation of our Faith, that when he should come, in whom not only the plainest and most unquestionable Prophecies, but all other Types, and the more obscure Prefigurations of the Messias would be fulfilled, we might without the least doubt believe and follow him.

2. This word of Prophecy is said to be *a light shining in a dark place*, the reason of which Expression is plain enough, if we consider, that the Prophecies were nothing so easie to be understood by themselves, as they were afterwards made by the Events which they foretold, and therefore till the Events made all plain, the World was very much in the dark about the meaning of them, as to most particulars; but yet some of them were so express and full, that they had raised an Expectation, not only in the *Jews*, but amongst the *Gentiles* also, of that extraordinary Person, whom God would send into the World for their relief. And therefore they might very well be compared to *a light shining in a dark place*: For such a Light, though it doth not make a particular discovery of those things that lie round about it, is yet apt to draw the Eyes of all towards it, that are

are within distance ; and the Predictions concerning Christ were so remarkable, that they awakened the Gentiles themselves to take notice of them, and were therefore *a light shining in a dark place*, to *Jews and Gentiles* ; not indeed, clearly revealing the Truth to them at present, but preparing them to receive it, when it should be clearly revealed in the accomplishment of all that had been foretold.

And whereas this *Light* was said to *shine till the day dawned, and the day-star arose in their hearts* : The plain meaning seems to be, that from the beginning of the World, to the appearance of Christ, the Prophecies concerning him grew still more express clear and particular, as the time drew on, that they were to be accomplished. The whole *Word of Prophecy* was *a light shining in a dark place* ; but the latter Prophecies, such as in *Isai-ah*, *Daniel*, and *Malachi*, were like the *dawning of the day*, before the *Sun of Righteousness* himself appeared. By such degrees did God prepare Mankind for the belief of the Gospel, every Age contributing something before-hand, to undermine the Prejudices of *the Natural Man* against it. That God should send his Son  
into

into the World to be a Sacrifice for Sin, was a Mystery so far above the reach of worldly Wisdom, and natural Reason, that considering our weakness, it would hardly have born being revealed all at once, and therefore God chose to let Mankind into the knowledge of it by degrees, and by the growing Light of Types and Prophecies, to prepare them for that stronger Light of the plain and clear Truth, which in due time was to be revealed: And by this way God also provided a sure Foundation for their Faith, who should afterwards believe; only we must do what St. Peter commends the Christians of his time for doing, we must *παρατηροῦμεν*, we must give heed unto, and bend our Minds to consider the *Word of Prophecy*, and we must attend to it, as to a *light shining in a dark place, till the day dawns*; that is, we must not content our selves to try any one single Prediction only, to compare it with the History of Jesus, and then if that doth not give full satisfaction to try no more. But as God, by every new Prediction added more Light to the *Word of Prophecy*, so we should consider what Evidence is given to the Gospel by the Prophecies of the Old Testament, taken altogether from the first to the last.

And

And this was the Method which our Saviour took to instruct the two Disciples going to *Emmaus* : They were not unacquainted with the Prophecies of the Old Testament, and yet they were mightily staggered at the shameful Death of their Master ; *We trusted*, say they, *that this had been he, which should have redeemed Israel* ; but now they know not what to think of it. *Then said Jesus unto them, O fools and slow of heart, to believe all that the Prophets have spoken ! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his Glory ?* But what course did he take to convince them, did he take some one notable Prediction by itself, and lay all the stress upon that ? No, but *beginning at Moses, and all the Prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself*. It was this that made the *day* star arise in their hearts, it was this that cleared all their doubts, and enlightened their Understandings so perfectly, that they afterwards said one to another, *Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures*, Luke 24.

3. The Word of Prophecy is said to be *sure*; that is, 'tis a plain Testimony of God, to make us sure that Jesus is the Christ. For,

1. It is absurd to ascribe the Prediction of these Events to any Cause, less than Divine Omniscience; for as *St. Peter saith, Prophecy came not by the will of man; but holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and no Prophecy of the Scripture is of private interpretation* (i. e.) Not, as some would make us believe, no Prophecy of Scripture is to be meditated upon, and read by private Men; but the Prophets did not utter their Predictions by the private Spirit, but by the Spirit of God; therefore if at vast distances of time from the Event, it was foretold in several Ages, that one in whom *all the Nations of the Earth should be blessed*, would come into the World, of such a Nation, of such a Family, at such a Time and Place, with several publick and notorious Characters, by which he should be known. Then certainly he in whom all these Predictions have been fulfilled, is by the Testimony of God's Omniscience declared to be that great *Prophet, who was to come into the World*. Or, shall we say, that these

these things were the effects of Policy, or Combination, or Chance? Could the most politick Statesman foresee the rise of Empires not yet begun? how much less could they fix their periods, as the Prophets did in their Predictions concerning Christ and his Kingdom? And can we think that they could at the distance of many Ages with their utmost skill foresee so many particular events, as were foretold by the Prophets, and accomplished in Christ Jesus? Or shall we say, that there was a confederacy between *Moses* and *Jesus*, between the Prophets and Jesus, so many hundreds of years after they were dead, and before he was born? Or, are these Predictions and their events to be imputed to chance? It is possible, indeed, that some one thing may be foretold, and happen accordingly; but that so vast a number of particulars should be foretold concerning one Person at all adventures, and by strange luck come to pass afterwards, is fit for them only to believe, that can believe that the World was made by a casual hit of Atoms. To name these things, is enough, to confute them.

2. All that can be farther desired, is to be well assured, that these Prophecies

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were



were not forged by the followers of Jesus, but that they were indeed contained in the Ancient Writings, that had been delivered down to the Jews of our Saviour's time, by their Ancestors; and the constant testimony of the Jews themselves, who were most bitter enemies to Jesus and to his Doctrine, were enough to satisfy us in this point.

4/y, And Lastly, Whereas these Predictions are said to be a more sure word of Prophecy, the meaning is this, that they are a more convincing Testimony to Jesus than any other taken by its self; they are indeed a more permanent Testimony, and withal less liable to Cavil and Objection. I cannot stand to shew this by making particular comparisons, but shall only observe, That Prophecy includes all other Testimonies, and adds strength to every one of them: It comprehends the Miracles of Jesus and of his Apostles, his resurrection and ascension, the descent of the Holy Ghost, and the excellency of his Doctrine, because these were all foretold: It includes all other proofs, as well as the things proved; and those proofs are the more convincing, because they also had been foretold by the Prophets.

From

From all this it follows, That allowing the Scripture that Tradition, which other good Histories have, and which they have more of than any other Ancient Writings in the World, then the Prophecies of the Old Testament, and the accomplishment of them in the New, do prove the Divine Authority of the Scriptures, and this without the help of the Churches Authority; and well is it for the Christian Religion, that the Scriptures may be proved without the Authority of the Church, for otherwise Christianity must never look an Infidel in the face, since the Church hath no Authority at all, till we are assured of the truth of the Scriptures themselves. And I will make bold to add, That when all those objections against the Authority of the Old Testament, from the time wherein it was put into this form of Books, from the light oversights of Transcribers, from various readings, and all the cavils upon any part of it, are put together, the word of Prophecy which runs through it all, will bear all this reckoning, and still remain an invincible argument, that the first Authors were inspired; that *the Prophecy came not in Old time by the will of man, but that holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

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Well therefore might *St. Peter* commend the Jewish Converts for taking heed to the word of Prophecy since this was the way to come to a well-grounded Faith indeed, and to grow every day to greater assurance and stedfastness therein ; and for the same reason, let us, I beseech you be exhorted to like diligence in conversing with the Holy Scriptures, that our minds may be more enlightned with the knowledge of Divine truth, and that every doubt, if any there be, that shakes our Faith, may be removed.

And this Exhortation is so needful, that I shall shew, that there is no good reason in their objection against it, who have taken a great deal of pains to exclude all but the Clergy, and those that have special license from reading the Scriptures ; the sum of what they say is this, That the promiscuous Liberty of reading the Scriptures leads the People into pride and self-conceit, makes them insolent and ungovernable, and ready to throw off all Respect to their lawful Guides. That almost all Heresies have proceeded from misinterpretation of Scripture ; and that there are so many obscure and difficult places in the Old and New Testament, that to translate the Bible into Vulgar Tongues, and to encourage

courage the People to read it, is to betray them into the danger of infinite errors, which they are likely enough to fall into, by mistaking the sence of the holy Text, which therefore is to be kept out of the hands of the Laity, as we would keep Children from meddling with edged Tools, and lay Swords out of mad-men's way.

Now if this charge be true, the *Bible* is a very dangerous Book; if it be not true, there is some other reason doubtless, why they that pretend this, have no kindness for the *Bible*. I shall omit several advantages that may be taken against this flourish, because I think it may be shown very briefly, that it pretends things that do by no means hang well together; that it takes things for granted that are not true; and that it concludes as strongly against the Scriptures being read by the Clergy, as by the Laity.

It pretends some things that do not hang well together. On the one side they tell us that the liberty of reading the *Bible* is apt to make the People throw off all dependance upon the Priest, as to instruction: on the one side, that there are obscure and difficult passages in it; by mistaking the true sence of which they will be led into Heresie, and consequent

ly into the way of Damnation. Now indeed the Scriptures say this of themselves, that there are diverse *things hard to be understood in them, which ignorant and unstable men have wrested to their own destruction.* But if this be true, the best way to keep the People in modest dependance upon the instruction of their Spiritual Guides, is to lay the *Bible* before them, and not to keep it from them ; since there cannot be a more convincing Argument of the necessity of attending to their Pastors in order to farther Instruction, than the several difficulties that occur in the Scriptures, and the warnings that the Scriptures themselves have given of the danger that unlearned and unstable Men are in, of wresting them to their own destruction. If it be said, that experience shews the contrary ; and that neither this nor any other argument can make People modest, if they are generally permitted to have the Scriptures ; I add,

2. That this arguing takes things for granted, which are not true in point of fact ; all the Faithful anciently had the Scriptures, but we find little complaint by the Bishops and Clergy then of the Wantonness and Insolence of the People ; so little in comparison of the frequent and earnest

earnest exhortations, that all would diligently Read the Scriptures, that it may be said to be none at all. Christian People that had been trained up in the first Rudiments of the Faith were not only allowed them, but required to Read the *Bible*; and yet they modestly attended upon their Spiritual Guides, for farther Instruction out of the *Bible*. And therefore if some Men in later Ages have grossly Misinterpreted the Scriptures, and would not be set right by those, that had more skill to Interpret them; this doth not prove, that the reading of the Scriptures makes the People ungovernable, for then it must always have been so, which is notoriously false, and whereas it is said, that almost all Heresies have come of Misinterpreting Scripture, this doth not prove that Christian People must not read the Scriptures, for it cannot be denied, that those Heresies which have given any considerable disturbance to the Church of God, were begun, not by Laicks or illiterate Persons; but by such Men as the objectors do allow to have a right of reading and studying the Scriptures, (*i. e.*) by Bishops or Priests. Wherefore

In the last place, The Arguing of these Men against the common use of the *Bible*,

concludes against the Priest, as strongly as against the People. For if to prevent Heresie, the Scriptures are to be kept from Lay-men, who may bring Heresie into the Church by Misinterpreting the Scriptures, then for the same reason Men in Orders should not be suffered to read them, since they have actually been the founders of Heresie; nay, the reason is something stronger, since the wresting of the Holy Text by men of Office or Learning, will be of greater Authority and do more mischief, than the mistakes of private and unlearned Persons. But if the danger of perverting difficult places, be a good reason to deprive Men of all use of the *Bible*; this reason hath a particular force upon some Men, that they should never look upon a *Bible* more. For the best way to judge how the Scriptures are likely to be used by any sort of Men, is to consider how they have constantly used them heretofore; and let any indifferent Man judge of them by these following instances; Because God said, *Let us make man after our own Image*, therefore it is lawful to fall down before an Image of Wood, or Stone. Because Christ said to *Peter*; *Feed my Sheep*, Therefore his pretended Successors have power to depose Heretical Princes. Because *Peter* said to

Christ,

Christ, Lord here are two Swords, therefore they have a Temporal, as well as a Spiritual jurisdiction. Because *Jacob* in Blessing *Ephraim* and *Manasses* prayed that his Name might be Named on them, therefore it is lawful to pray to Saints. Because it is said, the Disciples met together to *break Bread*, therefore the Laity may be deprived of the Cup. Because *St. Paul* saith of him that prayeth in a Tongue not understood by others, *Thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified*; therefore it is in it self good to appoint publick Prayers in a Language unknown to the People; that is, because he that understands what himself says, doth well for himself because he understands, therefore he doth well for others that understand not a word, and are therefore not edified. Because the Apostle saith, we must *Glorifie God with one mouth*; therefore in all publick Offices of Liturgy, there is to be but one, and that the Latin Tongue in all places of *Christendom*. Because that many Languages at *Babel* caused confusion, therefore for God to be served in the many Vulgar Tongues of Christian Nations, would breed Schisms in the Church. Because the *Beast* that touched the mountain was to die; and because Christ said, *Give not that which is Holy to Dogs*; therefore



fore ordinary People are not to have the *Bible*. These Expositions are not invented, but there are good Authorities for them, and for a great many more of the like sort.

I know not what can farther be objected but this, That if Priests and Learned Men have been so foully mistaken in the Interpretation of Scripture, how much more are the Unlearned in danger of falling into Mistakes, which tho' perhaps will never come to be Heresies in the Church, may yet prove damnable to themselves, as St. *Peter* plainly saith ?

To which I answer, That St. *Peter's* *Unlearned* Men were such as had not yet attained to the knowledge of the necessary Doctrine of Faith and good Life, as appears by his calling them *unstable*, not yet fixt in the Perswasion of the plain Truths, and great Ends of the Gospel; and such as those, whether they were Men of good Parts or not, were likely enough to interpret the hard places of St. *Paul's* Epistles, to a sence contrary to the plain and open Truths of the Gospel. But if a Man be instructed in the necessary and plain Doctrine of Christianity, and moreover furnished with Modesty and a sincere Love of the Truth, and willingness  
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to learn, Qualities that ought to be common to all, he shall be as far from wresting the difficult Scriptures to his own destruction, as one that hath vastly greater Abilities. Nay, I will add one thing, which if it be true, there is no force at all in the Objection; and that is this: That the service of a Cause, and espousing the Interest of a By-party, doth more fatally lead to Misinterpretation of the Scripture, than bare weakness of Understanding; and there is this plain reason for it, because Modesty and Love of the Truth will secure a Man of no great Abilities, from rash concluding upon the difficult Places of Scripture; but Partiality, and the Service of a By-cause, shall engage a Man of Parts and Learning, to trouble the clearest, and to pervert the plainest Texts, as the forementioned Instances evidently shew; so that either the danger of Misinterpreting Scripture is no sufficient reason to prohibit the Laity from reading it; or else it were better that no Order of Men were trusted with it at all; and if that be true, I think it will follow, that it had better never have been written at all, which no Man will say, whatever he thinks.

But

But to speak to the thing ; the Scriptures were written for an universal good, and in order thereunto, for common use : Here are all Divine Truths and Reasons of Christian Faith and Practice, that are necessary to be known of every Man, plainly exprest for the use of the meanest Capacities. Here are also Difficulties and Mysteries of several sizes, fit to employ the Industry of the Learned according to the several degrees of their Abilities, and to exercise the Modesty, the Humility, and the Reverence of all. But still we confess, that they may be perverted and abused ; and if this be a sufficient reason to interdict the general use of them, then farewell at once to all the Comforts of this Life, and to all the Means of Grace in order to a better, with every one of which Men in their folly and wickedness may and very often have hurt themselves and others. *St. Peter* was aware of this, that some Men wrested those hard things in *St. Paul's* Epistles, and in other Scriptures, to their own destruction ; But did he therefore dissuade the Faithful from reading them ? No, but in the very same Epistle, he commends them all, for *taking heed to the words of Prophecy* of the Old Testament, in which there were some things

## The Ninth Sermon.

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as hard, to be sure, as any are in *St. Paul's* Writings : and I hope, *St. Peter* was as wise a Man in this point, as any that have come after him.

And now, I beseech you, let us not say, That we are Believers already, and therefore we need not trouble our selves with constant reading of the *Bible*. Were not they so to whom *St. Peter* wrote ? Nay, the Apostles were then alive to instruct them by Word, as well as by Writing, and moreover daily Miracles were wrought for Confirmation of the Faith, yet they did well in taking diligent heed to the Scriptures ; And shall not we do so too, who can find Apostles and Miracles no where but there ? We believe already, but have we all of us that steadfast Faith, which the Gospel requires, which is not grounded meerly upon Education, and the Custom of our Country, but upon *the demonstration of the Spirit and of Power* ? Have we that Faith, which will bear examination, and encounter opposition ? If we have, a very little Exhortation will serve the turn, to make us persevere in reading God's Book, whereby we shall be yet more strongly *built up in our most holy Faith*. But if not, our want of Faith will not be admitted at the last Day, for an excuse

excuse of the badness of our Lives, when we had the Scriptures laid before us, the Holy Scriptures ; I say, which if they had been diligently and honestly read by us, would have furnished us with such an immovable ground of our Christian Belief, as would have supported us in the Day of Temptation. Nay, if our Faith was grown never so strong ; yet the reading of the Scriptures would be necessary for us, to make the Precepts and Rules of the Christian Life, and the Motives and Reasons of practising them, daily present in our Minds. For the Temptations to sin are always present ; the Snares of Hell are still round about us ; we are ever in some danger, and therefore we ought always to *be strong in the Lord* ; by having a constant sense of those Divine Truths upon our Minds, which are our great defence and security. And I see not how this can be, if we neglect to have recourse unto that ever necessary Treasure of Divine Truth, the Holy Word of God. St. *Chrysostom* therefore doubted not to say, and I wish we may all well consider, that earnest saying of so wise and holy a Man as he was : *It cannot be*, says he, *It cannot possibly be, that a Man should attain Salvation, unless he be diligently con-*

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*versant in Spiritual Reading.* Himself was so excellent and constant a Preacher, that if any one Man, not extraordinarily inspired, could have made it needless for his Hearers to read the Scriptures at home; he, I should reckon, was the Man; and yet I observe, he often complains to them, that the reason why most of them gained little profit by what he said, either as to improvement of Knowledge or good Practice, was because they did not read the Scriptures he explained to them, either before or after his Sermons: and says he, *It is the neglect of this Reading, that causeth all Heresie, and corrupt Life.*

Now I beseech you, how much time do we spend in other things of little concern to us, either as to our Health or Wealth, or our Worldly Callings? And what a shame and a sin is it for us to find so little time as generally we do, to furnish our selves with the knowledge of God's Truth, and with pious Affections towards the doing of his Will, out of God's Holy Book? What a great matter were it, if we borrowed some time for this purpose from our Recreations, or even from our ordinary Business? For what is this Life to Life Everlasting? What is the Wealth and Pleasure of this World, to our Salvation in the World to come? And therefore

fore the forementioned excellent Person argued with his Hearers in this manner : Perhaps some may say, That they are otherwise employed in their worldly Callings ; and others, that they have not Money to spare to buy the Scriptures ; but, says he, what a ridiculous thing would it be for a Man of a Secular Employment, to neglect it upon pretence, that he has not time for it, or that he has not wherewithal to purchase the necessary Tools of his Calling ? These things are seldom or never pleaded, but by Idle Persons : And do you not all know, that you are professed Christians, and called to the hope of Eternal Life, and that diligent reading and hearing the holy Scriptures is as necessary to your Christian Calling, as any thing can be, to the successful management of your Secular Professions ?

I shall add this one thing, That besides that Improvement in Knowledge and Vertue, which is naturally consequent upon much conversing with God's Book, they that do so, have a peculiar Title to GOD's supernatural Blessing ; who is wont to reward a Pious and Reverend Use of Holy Things, with greater Measures of his Grace. In one word, by other studies

studies we may grow wise for this World,  
but if we add this to the rest, we shall yet  
grow wiser for this World, by *taking*  
*heed* to those incomperable Instructions,  
that the Holy *Bible* abounds with ; and  
which is something more, we shall grow  
*wise unto Salvation.*

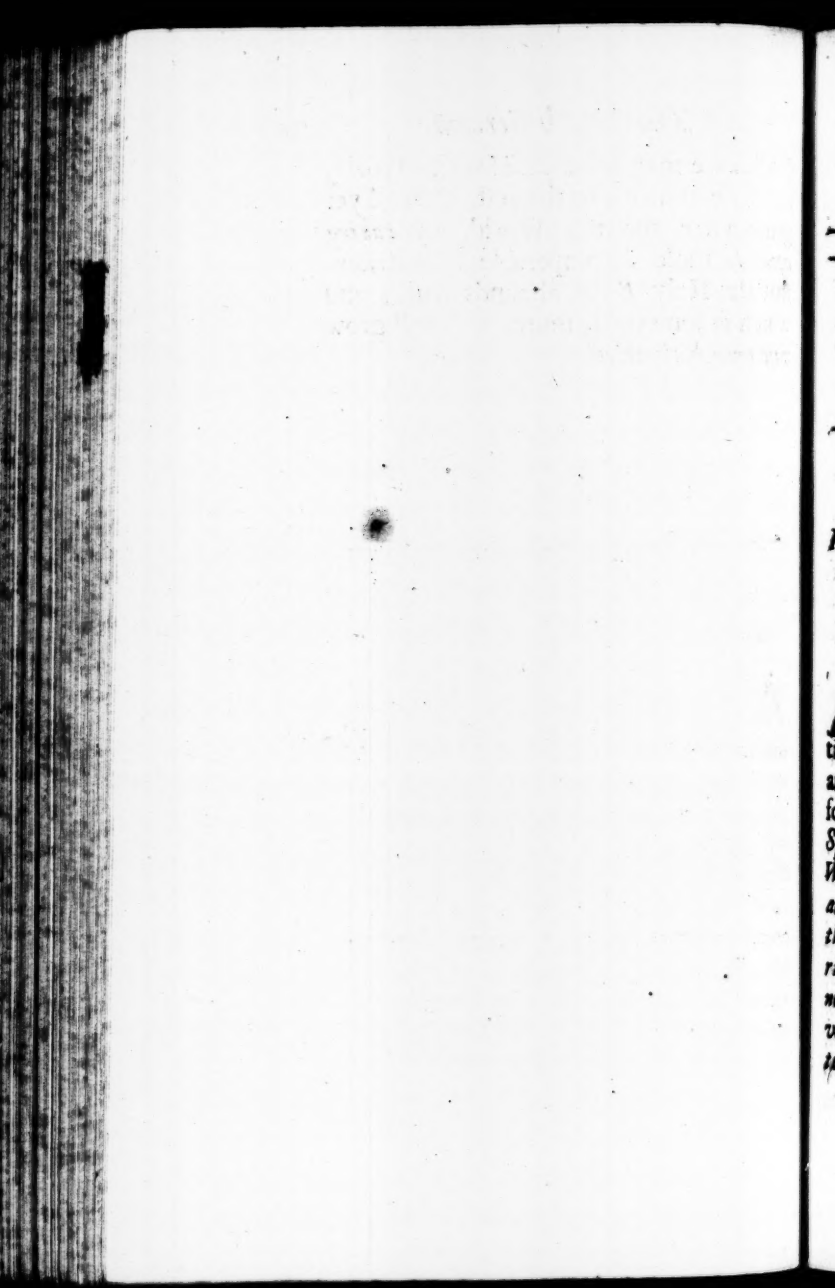
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## The Tenth Sermon.

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### I. COR. XII. 13.

*For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles; whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit.*

**A**fter the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, there was a continual Communication of Supernatural and Extraordinary Gifts to other believers for a long time. *To one was given by the Spirit the Word of Wisdom; To another the Word of Knowledge by the same Spirit; To another Faith by the same Spirit; To another the gifts of Healing by the same Spirit; To another working of Miracles; To another Discerning of Spirits; To another Divers kinds of Tongues; To another the Interpretation of Tongues; But all these wor-*

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*keeth that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. And this manifestation of the Spirit was given to every man to profit withal ; (i. e.) to profit the whole Body, whereof himself was a Member. For though that one Spirit, which distributed his wonderful gifts amongst the Faithful could have given them all to the same Man, so as that one and the same Person should have had the Word of Wisdom, and the Gifts of Healing and the working of Miracles, and a Prophetick Power, and discerning of Spirits, and divers kinds of Tongues ; yet to maintain a mutual dependance, and a Charitable serviceableness of the Members, one amongst another, he gave to one one gift ; to another, another ; dividing severally to every Man, for by this means one would stand in need of another, and each Member would be obliged to take care of the rest, knowing that he also wanted the supply of that assistance, which the rest were able to give him ; whereas if one Man had all gifts, he would not be under so sensible an obligation of consulting for the common good, wanting no assistance from any others. But God ordered the state of the Church, like that of the Natural Body ; to which*

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the Apostle elegantly compares the Body of Christ : *The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee ; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you, v. 21.*

Now it being the Apostles design in this Chapter to press the Christians to Charity and Unity, and mutual servicableness one to another as Members of the same Body, he assures them in the Words of the Text, which I have chosen ; That they were indeed Members of one Body, and he tells them what it was that made them so. *For by one spirit*, says he, *we are all baptized into one body ; whether we be Jews or Gentiles ; and have been made to drink into one spirit* : that is, by being Baptized, they were made Members of the Body of Christ, and united one to another under him the Head ; and this, *whether they were Jews or Gentiles ; bond or free (i. e.)* whatever worldly circumstances made any distinction between them, yet they were one in Christ, who professed his Faith, and were by Baptism admitted into his Church. And this Union of one to another under Christ, was testified and declared by their Communion in the Table of the Lord.

And whereas he says, that by *one spirit* they were baptized into this *one body*, and were all made to *drink into one spirit* ; the

meaning is, that the Grace of the Holy Spirit was given in Baptism, and in the Lords Supper, to all the Faithful: who do not receive unprofitable signs, but one as well as another receives the quickning Grace of God, to make them living Members of that one Body.

So that although there was a diversity and an inequality in the Spiritual Gifts that were distributed among the Faithful in those days, yet they were all equally Members of the same Body of Christ, in as much as they were all Baptized into his Body; and were all equally partakers of his Table.

And thus I have explained the meaning of the Text with the relation it hath to the design of the Apostle in this Chapter. That which remains, is to speak to the particular design of the Text, which is to shew that Christians are one body or Society of Men, and wherein the *Unity of the Church* consists, and what our part is to maintain it: and how we may in this divided state of Christianity be satisfied, that we are within that Unity. Before I enter upon which, I may well make Two Observations upon the Text in behalf of the Doctrine and Practice of this our Church of *England*.

I. That

1. That St. *Paul* thought the observati-  
on of the two institutions of our Saviour,  
*viz.* Baptism, and the Communion of the  
Holy Table, was a sufficient proof, that  
believers were one Body : And we have  
reason to believe, that if he had known  
there were other Sacraments, or outward  
badges of Christian profession instituted by  
Christ for the Church, which is his Body ;  
he would not have omitted the mention of  
them here, where he proves the Unity of  
the Church by Baptism, and Communion  
of the Body and Blood of Christ. We  
know that the Evangelists mention no o-  
ther outward signs, and visible tokens of  
our profession, and God's Grace, but Bap-  
tism, and the Lords Supper : And it is some-  
thing to our purpose, that St. *Paul* owns  
no more than these ; where he industri-  
ously proves, that Christians are one body  
by these.

2. I observe, that the Communion of the  
Lord's Table is described by *drinking into*  
*one Spirit (i. e.)* by one part of the Sacra-  
ment, as sometimes it is by the other of  
*breaking of bread*. But then nothing can  
be more plain from such expressions, than  
that one part or kind is as necessary as the  
other ; because sometimes one, sometimes  
the other is put for both which had been

against all Rules of speaking, if it had been allowable to separate the one from the other. But as to that of drinking the Cup, it is most evident that it belonged to all; for says St. Paul, *We have all been made to drink into one Spirit.* All who? All the Priests of the Christian Church only? No: all that belong to the Body of Christ, *whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free.* But now if St. Paul had known, that it was not necessary for the Christian People to drink of the Cup in the Communion, but that it was sufficient for them to have received the Bread only; Can we think, that he would have described their receiving the Sacrament, by receiving a part of it, which did not necessarily belong to them, and not rather by that which did? I do not make this observation to prove only, that the People did at first universally receive the Cup; for that is not denied by any, but by those who have disputed themselves out of all Modesty, and even these may be convinced beyond all doubt by this very place, that all the Faithful in St. Paul's days received the Cup; for otherwise how could he with truth have said, that they had been *all made to drink into one Spirit.* But that which I chiefly observe is this, That though the faithful did

in those days drink as well as eat at the Lord's Table, yet if the Apostle had known, and surely he knew it, if it was true, that however it was the practice then, yet it might without injury be altered in after times, he would not have used an argument to satisfy the Faithful of his time, that they all belonged to the Body of Christ, which might afterwise be quite out of doors, viz. when the Church should please to alter the Institution of our Saviour in this matter; but he would rather have insisted upon receiving in that kind, which could not be justly taken away from them, and have said that all had been Baptized into the Body of Christ, or made Members of his Church by Baptism; and all that are of his Body may claim to eat of *that one Bread.* This by the bye.

I now address my self to the main business I propounded, which is to state the notion of the *Unity of the Church*, to shew what is meant by it, and to make some Inferences from it for our farther Instruction.

And in the first place, it is evident, that St. Paul here speaks not of any one particular Church, but of the Society of all Christians whatsoever, that are Baptized, and have a right to the Holy Communion, whether they be *Jews or Gentiles.*



*ties* : And it is concerning the Unity of this Church that we are to enquire, or what that is which makes it *one Body*, as the Apostle here calls it.

To which purpose we are to consider distinctly, what are the several Grounds or Notions of Unity, which are laid down in the New Testament, or what those things are that belong in common to all Christians, as their Duty or their Privilege, and in respect of their Joynt-performance of the former of which, and their enjoyment of the latter, they may be said to be *One*.

I. Therefore all Christians do unite in their profession to submit to one Head, who is our Lord Jesus Christ, which is so necessary a Duty incumbent on all, that he who makes not this profession, is in no respect within the Unity of the Church; this being the ground of all other Reasons of Unity whatsoever; and therefore the Apostle makes this to be one principal Foundation of the Unity of the Church, that it professes subjection to one Lord, *Eph. 4. 5*. And in the third Verse of this Chapter he lays down this mark of distinction between the impulse of the Spirit of God, and the impulse of an evil Spirit; That whosoever is led by the former, *doth say, that Jesus is the Lord*  
They

2. They are also *One* in professing the common Faith, that *was at first delivered to the Saints* ; which began to be preached when the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles, and hath ever since been contained in the Holy Scriptures, and summarily expressed in the ancient Creeds : And therefore to *one Lord*, the Apostle doth in the forementioned place add *one Faith* : Thus we find in *Rom. 6. 17.* That one *Form of Doctrine* was delivered to Christians, and that they are to *stand fast in one Spirit* ; and with *one mind, striving together for the Faith of the Gospel*, *Phil. 1. 27.* Thus St. Paul charged *Timothy*, That if any man taught otherwise, and consented not to wholesome words, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he should from such withdraw himself, *1 Tim. 6. 3.* Not looking upon them any longer as Christians, or as such conversing with them ; which together with many other like passages manifestly shews, that he who in any point departed from the common Faith of Christians, that was received from the Apostles, was broken off from the Unity of the Church, which is *One* by a common profession of certain Points of grand importance, taught at first by the Holy Spirit. For which reason

son St. Cyprian doubted not to say, *He cannot seem a Christian, who doth not persist in the Unity of Christ's Gospel and Faith.*

3. There is an Unity of Sacraments in the Christian Church ; *One Baptism*, by which we are all admitted into the same state of Duties and Priviledges, undertaking the Conditions of the New Covenant, and gaining a Right to the Promises thereof ; and therefore the Apostle adds also one *Baptism*. And here in the Text he expressly affirms, that by one Spirit we are baptized into one Body ; into one Body of People, professing one common Faith, and claiming the Priviledges belonging to such a Profession. The like Unity is inferred from the other Sacrament, since we *are all made to drink into one Spirit*. And in the 10th Chapter of this Epistle, v. 16, 17. he saith : *The Cup of Blessing, which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ ? The Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ : For we being many are one Bread, and one Body ; for we are all partakers of that one Bread.*

4. There is also an Unity of Obedience to the same Laws and Institutions : For to all Christians it equally belongeth to govern themselves effectually by the

will

will of their Lord Jesus Christ, to observe his Ordinances and Commands ; by the doing of which they declare themselves to be of his Flock, in that they *hear his Voice* ; and of his Kingdom, in that they live by his Laws ; and that as there is one and the same Obligation, so there is one and the same correspondent Practice, one and the same Spirit of Obedience that runs through all.

5. There is also an Unity of Affection, or mutual Charity prescribed to the Church. Thus saith our Saviour : *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.* Thus saith the Apostle in this Chapter ; *The Members should have the same care one for another ; and whether one Member suffer, all the Members suffer with it ; or one Member be honoured, all the Members rejoyce with it :* which kind of Unity appeared most visibly after the Church was begun, on the day of Pentecost ; for it is observed presently, that *the multitude of them that believed, were of one Heart, and of one Soul, Acts 4 32.*

6. There is also an Unity of Communion in the Service and Worship of God, in joyning together in the same Acts of Piety and Devotion, according to the Rules

Rules of the Gospel, in Prayers and in Sacraments ; and in *glorifying God with one mouth* ; moreover, in the common defence of the same Truth ; and in the joynt opposition of every dangerous Error, in propagating and promoting the same Faith of the Gospel, and striving together for the Interest of it.

7. There is also an Unity of Discipline or Government, which is to be maintained by every Member's keeping in his Place and Order in the Church ; the People of Christ receiving the Mysteries of Christianity from their Pastors ; and these confederating one with another for the maintenance of common Christianity, without invading each others Liberty and Jurisdiction, and accommodating as near as may be, all Rites of Discipline and Worship to one another, and assisting each other by Advice and Correspondence, and giving no occasion to breach of Charity and Christian Communion, by abusing a lawful, or by claiming an undue Authority.

Other more particular Instances might be mentioned, but I shall content myself with these, believing that upon these Grounds of Unity, which I have noted, it will not be difficult to satisfy those Scruples which have been thrown into some

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Mens Minds concerning the necessity of being of that one Church, which is the Body of Christ, and they are chiefly two.

1. That there must be one Church ; which is the only Church of Christ, exclusively to all the rest, that are not in Communion with her.

2. That where there is most Unity, there of necessity must be the true Church.

1. That there is one Society or Communion, which is the Body of Christ, exclusively to all other Communions whatsoever. For thus they argue : The Apostle here, and the New Testament elsewhere affirms, That the Disciples of Christ are *one Body*. If therefore there be, as there are several Bodies of Christians in this divided state of Christendom, that are not United in Communion, in Worship, in Government, no nor in Doctrine neither ; these cannot all be the Body of Christ, which is but one, and therefore there must be but one of them which is that *Body of Christ, or the true Church* : And from hence they proceed farther ; since we grant that they are a Church, we do in effect grant, that we are not so much as a part of the true Church our selves, because we are not in Communion with them, and we and they

they are not Members of one another, as all the Members of the Church are.

Which kind of reasoning, how likely soever it may be to confound and amuse a Man, is by no means fit to unsettle a prudent, nor so much as an honest Person, if he will give himself leave to consider.

The plain Answer to these Harangues is this: That Christians are not united into one Body or Church in all respects, but in some they are. There is the Unity of *one Lord*, and *one Faith*, and *one Baptism*, which makes them *one Body*: But then alas, they are not always one Body in respect of Unity and Affection, and good will towards one another, nor in respect of Unity of Communion in the Service of God, or of Discipline and Government as they ought to be. But now the profession of the same *Faith which was once delivered to the Saints*; and Admission into the state of Christian Duties and Priviledges by Baptism, is that which makes a Christian, and which unites all Christian Societies into one Body. They indeed who are defective in this, are no Christians; and they who come thus far, are so; because *we are all baptized into one Body*. But then we grant, there ought to be a farther Unity, and in particular an Unity of Communion;

for

for the uniting of the Members of this Body more strictly to one another : But tho' there be not Unity of Communion, they do not therefore cease to be Members of one Body ; but all that can be truly said is, that some of the Members are contentious, and either give just cause of Offence, or take Offence when none is given ; which is indeed contrary to the Duty of the Members of the Church, but not utterly inconsistent with their being Members of it : and for this, we have the Authority of St. Paul in the two Verses, next but one to the Text : *If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body ?* That is, if the Members of the Body of Christ do contrary to their Duty in some respect, it doth not follow presently that they are no longer parts of the Church ; and if one Church will have no Communion with another, but upon most unjust and unreasonable Terms, it is very certain that Unity of Communion is not likely to last between them. But so long as there is an Unity of Faith, (*i. e.*) a consent in professing the necessary Articles of Christianity, they are yet one Body, though one part of it doth not perform the Duty incumbent on it, as it is a part of the Church,

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but will perhaps be the whole or nothing; and is not content to profess the first Faith, but moreover adds new Doctrines thereto, contrary to the Scriptures, and would impose them upon the rest of the Christian World. We may therefore in respect of Faith and Baptism grant, That Church which would be all in all, to be within the Unity of the Catholick Church, tho' we are not in Communion with it; but then in respect of Unity of Affection and Charity, and Unity of Communion in the Service of God, and in opposing all dangerous Errors; and Unity of Government in these respects, I say, she is not within the Unity of the Body, in as much as she doth contrary to her Duty in all these respects. So that tho' the Church be one in respect of Baptism, and the principal Articles of Christianity, yet because it is not one in other respects, I am by no means startled at that charge, *You and we are two Churches, because we are of opposite Communion, and therefore if you grant us to be a True Church, you must conclude your self not to be so.* For I have this to answer, That Faith which you profess with us, That Baptism which you administer, and receive with us, is that which makes you to be of the Church, and thus far you are one with

us:

us: 'Tis true indeed, there ought to be Unity in maintaining Communion in all Christian Offices, and to that end no false Doctrines are to be added to the profession of the Faith, nor any unlawful Practices to be brought into God's Worship; but this is that which we cannot help, though you can; and by such things, as these, you have departed from the Unity that ought to be in the Church, but we have not. To make which Answer more plain, let it be remembred, That one instance of that Unity, which ought to be in the Church, is keeping all the Commandments of God. Now all unholy Persons professing Christianity, do depart from this Unity; yet inasmuch as they are baptized, and profess the Creed, we own that they are visible parts of the Church.: But now because they are so, if they should charge all those that take not the same Liberties they do, with being out of the Church, because the Church is one Body, and they are granted to be of it; I think nothing could be more ridiculous; and it is little better that they say, who under the Protection of this Principle, That the Church is but One, would exclude all from being Parts of the Church who do not run into the same Enormities about Doctrine, Worship,

ship, and Government with themselves. In a word ; the Church is one in respect the of Common Faith which is professed every where amongst Christians, and it ought to be one ; but it is not in respect of Purity of Profession, and of Worship and Government : But it doth not from hence follow, that they, who are in the right, must go over to those that are in the wrong, in order to being a part of the Church, for that they are already ; but they that are in the wrong should learn to do their Duty better, that they may become a purer part of the Church, which yet they are not.

2. We are born in hand also, That where there is most Unity, there must of necessity be the True Church ; and this, because there is but *One Body* : Concerning which I say, That if by Unity be meant Agreement in all Points of any great consequence, they that advance this Principle, have advanced it against themselves ; for it must be a very uncomfortable one to those, that in many matters differ notoriously amongst themselves. But,

1. The Principle it self is false ; for there may be Unity in Error, as well as in Truth, and there hath been so. The false Prophets in *Elias's* time were at Unity, so were the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, that consented to our Saviour's Death ; no, no

*is Satan divided against himself*: It is not merely Unity, that is a mark of a true Church, unless it be Unity in the true Faith; nor is Unity the mark of a Pure Church, unless it be upon Terms of Obedience to God, of Charity to one another, of keeping the Faith unmixed with Errors and Innovations, and the Worship of God free from material defects and forbidden Practices. Unity in Error and Sin is to be broken; Unity only in Faith and Goodness is to be preserved.

2. It is possible that where there are discords, there may be yet more truth professed, than where there are none; and that for the former reason, Because there may be Unity in the worst Errours. Besides the Common Faith that is professed by all Christians, one part of the Church may maintain the Purity of that Profession against another that hath superadded New and False Doctrines to it, and yet the Reformed part may labour under discords, that affect their very Communion, while the other doth not. There may be on the one side disobedience to Authority, overvaluing of questions of no great moment, a greater stress laid upon Opinions or Practices, than the Cause will bear, and this shall be sufficient to break Christian Communion; and at the same time, whilst gross

Errours are maintained on the other side with one consent, the differences that happen by the bye may be so over-ruled by Authority, by Force and Power, and by the sensible Interests of this World, that, how wide soever they are, they shall not yet rend Communion. But in such a case, it were the sondest thing in the World to chuse a Doctrine by the mark of Unity among those that profess it. Therefore in this divided State of Christendom, it is easie to see what Christians are to do, to preserve the Unity of the Body of Christ, as much as in them lies, and to be sure that they are within the Unity of the Church in all respects.

1. I need not say, that they are to *stand fast in the Faith which was first delivered to the Saints*, in the Common Faith of Christians; for without this, they could not so much as continue in that Body, into which they were Baptized; only I may add, That they are to lay it up in their hearts, and to value it as the greatest Treasure, and to proclaim their esteem of it, and to acknowledge all that profess it, to be of the same Body with them. This being that Faith which Christ came down from Heaven to establish in the World, and which he sent the Holy Ghost to inspire his Apostles

Apostles withal, to reveal it to us; and to confirm it for us, by the Writings and by the Miracles of inspired Persons; 'Tis by this Faith and this Profession therefore, which includes Baptism, that they are Christians who will not allow us to be of the Church.

2. Let them keep themselves from entertaining any corrupt or false Doctrines, not only any that are contrary to the Scriptures, but any as necessary to Salvation, which are not to be proved by the Scriptures; for thus they will be sure to keep themselves from any dangerous errors, and continue not only true, but pure believers; and they sure are not the less, but the more in the Unity of the Church, who receive nothing as necessary to be believed in order to Salvation, but what by the undoubted Records of our Christian Faith, appears to have been taught by Christ and his Apostles.

3. Let every private Christian be most careful to observe the Commands of our Lord Jesus in the Government of all his Affections, and all his Actions; for Unity in this thing ought to be amongst all Christians, since without Obedience, no Man, how qualified soever he may be in the Church upon other accounts, shall

enter into the Kingdom of Heaven ; *not every one that saith, Lord, Lord* ; Without this, it is not the being of the one Church, it is not the professing of the *one Faith*, no nor the being of a pure profession, and a pure Communion, that will unite us really and effectually to our Lord Jesus, the Head of the Church ; but we shall be cut off from him, as branches that *bring forth no fruit*.

4. Let him maintain an universal Charity to all Christians, Good will to those that are misled and seduced, in endeavouring to reduce them, as he hath opportunity, in praying for them, readiness to be beneficial to all his Brethren, to forgive injuries, and to *overcome evil with good* ; compassion to the miserable, pleasure in that which is for the particular good of any one of his brethren, and much more in what is for the general good of all : Thus he shall preserve himself in the other Unity, which is the Duty of the Church, the Unity of Charity and Good will.

5. Let him live in strict Communion with the particular Church whereof he is a Member, in subjection to the Authority of it, in observing the Rules of it, for the guidance of Religious Assemblies, for the ordering of all things that fall under

der human Authority, (*i. e.*) the Authority of the Lawful Guides of the Church, in order to the Edification and well Governing of it: Thus he shall maintain an Unity of Communion with his Brethren and his Guides; and so in effect with the whole Christian Church, where the Parts of it do as they ought to do; and most undoubtedly we are not to be united to any of them in things wherein they do as they ought not.

The Sum of this Advice is easie to be understood, and to a good Man as easie to be practised. There is no need for him to trouble his own Mind with nice and intricate Questions about Unity, because he will maintain his part, in order to the Unity of the Church, by doing his plain Duty, by sticking to the Faith which is professed by all Christians the Faith in- to which we were Baptized; by rejecting whatsoever is contrary to the Scriptures, and making them the Rule of his Religious Persuasions, which all Christians ought to do, by observing the Rules of the Gospel for the Government of his Life and Actions; in which yet undoubtedly all Churches, and every Member of every Church ought to conspire; though this part of Unity is hardly remembred, when  
Men



Men talk of the Church; by bearing Christian Affection towards all that *name the name of Christ*, whereby he performs the Duty of Unity towards them (which, whether they do or not, they ought to perform too.) Finally, By frequenting the Service of God in Publick Prayers and Exhortations, in the Administration of Sacraments, according to the Order of the Church, whereof in particular, the Grace and Providence of God hath made him a Member, and which observes the Institutions of our Lord Jesus in all the Publick Offices of Religion: For thus he performs his part of Unity towards the whole Church, with respect to Communion; nor is he, nor can be to blame, if others will not be persuaded to it.

It is a fond thing to think of seeking a True Church, that is the only Church in opposition to all others, or to be Scandalized at the divided State of the Church, which we cannot help, and under a pretence of seeking for Unity, to mind nothing else. We are to preserve our selves in the Unity of the Church, by professing true Doctrine, and by leading good lives; by a Charitable Spirit and Behaviour towards all Christians; by frequenting Prayers and Sacraments,

Sacraments, and submitting to the Authority of our Lawful Guides in all things of Indifference and Prudence; and then we may be sure, that whatever others do, we *keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace*: And though after all, the Church is not that *One Body* which it would be, if all Men did their Duty, yet that we our selves are such Members of that *One Body*, as we ought to be, and as all others ought to be likewise.

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## The Eleventh Sermon.

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### GEN. XV. xvi.

*But in the fourth generation, they shall come hither again ; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.*

**A** *Brabam* was now in the Land of *Canaan*, and this was the third time God had appeared to him, and promised him, That his Seed should possess that Land. In which repetition of the Promise, there is this remarkable Circumstance, That God told him how long it would be, before they should possess it ; and likewise mentioned one reason why they should possess it no sooner : it should be Four hundred Years before his Seed should come hither, and not sooner, because *the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full*. This was the case : That the Seed of *Abraham* could not possess the Land of *Canaan*, otherwise than

than by dispossessing the *Canaanites* : So that the Bounty of God to the *Israelites* was likely to prove a terrible Judgment upon the *Canaanites* : But these were not grown to that height of Ungodliness and Vice, which God usually punishes by Destruction in this World ; but God foreseeing that in Four hundred Years more, their Sins would be ripe for Vengeance, determined to reprieve them so long ; and in the mean time, to dispose of the Seed of *Abraham* otherwise.

That which I intend to discourse upon, is, the long sufferance of God in bearing with Mankind, till their Wickedness grows intolerable ; of which this is a most remarkable Instance, That altho he might justly have destroyed the *Amorites* Four hundred Years before they were destroyed, yet he gave them so long time, and bore with them all the while. Before I proceed to this, I shall premise two Enquiries :

1. What the Iniquity of the *Amorites* was ?
2. Whether the only Reason why God would not yet put them out of possession was, That *their iniquity was not yet full* ?

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1. What was the Iniquity of the *Amorites*? I answer: That they were guilty of Idolatry, of Violence, and abominable Uncleanneſs; for they were for theſe Sins cut off by the Children of *Israel*, when they were grown to that height, to which they came in Four hundred Years time. And it is not improbable, that the *Amorites* were at that time, when God appeared to *Abraham*, the worſt of all the *Canaanites*, in all theſe reſpects; and therefore that God mentioned them, rather than any of the reſt, as they were afterwards one of the firſt Nations that were deſtroyed, as we read in *Numb.* 21. and that with this particular Remark, That their *Spirits were hardened*, and their *Heart obſtinate*; as you may find, *Deut.*

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2. We muſt not ſay, That the only Reaſon why God deferred the Punishment of the *Amorites* Four hundred years, was, becauſe *their iniquity was not yet full*; and that becauſe there were other Ends of Providence to be brought about in the time, ſome of which are mentioned in this place, *viz.* That the Seed of *Abraham* might in the mean while be proved and tried by many hardships they were to undergo, and there-

thereby instructed in their Duty, and prepared for the Land of Promise : For thus we find God said to *Abraham*, v. 13. *Know of a surety, that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years ; i. e. before the Four hundred Years are expired ; and also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge ; and afterwards they shall come out with great substance : and in the fourth generation they shall come hither again, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.* Where you see, there are more ends than one, for which God would not put the Seed of *Abraham* into a present possession of the promised Land ; nor do it in haste neither, partly, because God would still bear with the *Canaanites* ; partly, because the *Israelites* yet to be born, were to be instructed by the variety of Conditions through which they were to go, and be prepared by the Discipline of Divine Providence, for the obtaining of that Promise which was made to *Abraham* and his Seed : And this is the admirable way of God's Providence in governing and disposing all things, that by the same means he brings about several ends, fitting and accommodating things to one another in that manner, that

that every event seemed to be his particular and only care, while all the rest were as particularly aimed at, and the means directed to it as certainly as to any one of them. These things seemed needful to be premised, for the better understanding of this place. And now I proceed to the main points of Instruction, which are suggested in the Text, and they are these Two.

1. The patience of God, in bearing so long as he doth with the Provocations of his justice from wicked Men. And,

2. His untaxable Justice in bringing upon them that punishment, at last, which their Incurable Obstinacy deserves.

For both these Observations are clearly suggested by the Text : The seed of *Abraham* should not come Four hundred Years, because *the Iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full* ; but then they should come ; the former being, as I said, a great Demonstration,

1. Of the Patience of God ; for the *Amorites* were already fallen into the sins for which they were at last cut off ; only they were not come to that intollerable height of wickedness, to which they were grown in process of time ; now all the while they were Examples of Gods Patience, because he might justly have

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appeared



appeared against them to destroy them, even at that very time, when he determined to give them yet Four hundred Years to repent and escape: No sooner is Sin committed, but Punishment is presently due; and therefore it is Goodness to forbear the inflicting of it the very next moment; but to forbear so long a time, is properly Patience and Long-sufferance; and it is such Patience, as is proper only to him, who is God, and not Man: For the Illustration of which, I have Two Things to commend to your Consideration, which will, I doubt not, be useful to assist us in framing worthy and honourable Apprehensions of God, with respect to this matter. The First is,

1. That God never wants Power and Means and Opportunities to be avenged of wicked Men.

2. That he hath always the same displeasure against, and hatred of sin; for these things put together, do clearly shew, That the Patience of God is indeed a Divine Perfection, and infinitely to be praised above all that we can imagine of the like quality amongst Men. For,

1. God never wants Power and Means to punish his Enemies; and therefore it is in him always Goodness to relieve; and

and his deferring the Punishment, is properly the Patience, which is worthy of Praise. When Men forbear revenging the Affronts and Injuries that they have received, it is very often, because they wait for an opportunity, which yet they want; they are forced to be content for a while, because they have not power to Revenge; and for the most part they would not tarry, if they had present means to ease their minds; for this reason, we magnifie the patience of Men most of all, when they forgive, whilst it seems that it is in their power, without hurting themselves, to punish the Person that hath done them wrong; and we do in some measure commend those that frame themselves to Patience, when they have no other help: But this is the peculiar Character of the Patience of God, That it is as easie for him to Punish at first, as at last; and it is never otherwise. We can never say he forbears sudden Vengeance, because it would be dangerous, or he wants Power to take it; and we must therefore resolve his patience into other Causes, which are for the Honour of his Goodness. It is happy for Men in their Concerns with one another, when they, who have most Goodness, have greatest power; and the great Security

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of Mankind is this, That he only has Almighty Power, who is infinitely good; and this is that which Sinners should acknowledge to the Praise of God, That there is no other Being in Heaven or Earth, that can absolutely and irresistably overwhelm them, but he only, to whose Justice they are most liable, and of whose Goodness alone it is, that *they are not consumed*: If God with his Omnipotence were as Man, and subject to the Passions of Men; or if Man with his passions were in this respect, as God is, and could follow his anger with effect, the race of Mankind had long since been extinguished; and why it is not so, the reason is this, Because God only hath Infinite Power, he who is Infinitely Good, and delighteth not in Punishment, and *doth not willingly grieve and afflict the Children of men*. This is the first way of apprehending the perfect Goodness of the Divine Patience, that he doth not respite and delay the punishment of Sinners at any time for want of Power to take Vengeance of them; for *with God all things are possible*; and therefore his forbearance to punish, is always because it is his Will to forbear.

2. God hath always the same displeasure against Sin, and hates it at one time, as much as at another; and this is also a Remarkable Illustration of his Patience, and shews, that his forbearance to punish, is purely from his Goodness. If we are grieved and offended, the sense of the Injury we have received, is commonly very smart at first, but it lessens by degrees; and if the wrong-doer escapes our anger, while it is hot within us, he is not in so much danger of us afterwards; we are led by passion to retaliate evil; and as that cools we are less forward to do it; and in such cases our forbearance is not properly Patience, because feeling no grief our selves, we are not so desirous, that he who once provoked us should feel it now. But it is not so with God; he is not disturbed with our uneven passions, he abhors sin, not as if he was a revengeful, but because he is a most Holy Being; and because he is the same Holy God to day that ever he was; time doth not lessen his Sense, nor abate his Hatred of the evil Actions of Men; and therefore in him it is all the Goodness of Patience to forbear the deserved inflicting of those punishments, which he could inflict every moment; for he bears with that baseness, which he always hates.

Now since it is neither want of Power, nor want of Holiness, or hatred of Sin, that withholdeth the Vengeance of Divine Justice from falling upon Men, till their provocations are grown insufferable; it must be the Wise Goodness of God, that causeth his Patience and Long-sufferance. And there are several good effects to which it tendeth indeed; many Reasons that seem to require it.

I. *If sentence were speedily executed against an evil work, and if it seldom happened that a notorious wickedness was not forthwith made remarkable by a following vengeance, there would be a little space left for Repentance: But God would have all men to repent, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. And he is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* God's forbearance is necessary, that there might be room for other proper means to bring us to amendment; he doth not cut us off, even when we provoke him daily, because he would prevent that last sentence by other remedies, by gentle Admonitions, and sometimes by sharp Corrections, or by making others, that are grown incurable, the examples of his Justice, and by variety of instructing Providences, if by a-

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ny means we can be perswaded to our duty. Should God proceed to destroy, upon every grievous sin that is committed as in Justice he might, then alas ! our Eternal Salvation, which depends upon what we do in this short Life would by one single act become almost desperate, and we should have but one tryal in this life, in order to our Everlasting State : But how many have we had ! and here is the Goodness of God, that altho by wretched Men he is provoked day after day, yet he bears with them day after day, not being willing that they should perish ; for *he is the Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great compassion.*

2. If God were always sudden in his Justice, and should crush every wickedness with his hand, as soon as ever it appeared in the World, this proceeding would bear something hard upon the Liberty of Human nature, and be too great a force upon us ; and it would not be easily seen, whether we choose to do what God commands freely and heartily, or meerly upon the constraint of a servile Fear. God made us to serve him upon ingenuous and manly Principles, and hath therefore given us a sense of his Presence, and of his Providence, with the Knowledge of his Will, and the Ex-  
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pectation of being rewarded or punished hereafter : But it upon every notorious offence the Malefactor was made an example of notable Vengeance, the perpetual observation of this would be like a Flaming Sword hanging over every Man's head, and keeping him in a perpetual Apprehension of present Destruction, if he should step aside ; which would indeed be a way to keep Men from being very bad, but not to make them truly Good ; their avoiding Vice, would be like the Honesty of a Man, that doth not Steal, because his hands are always manacled.

3. If God doth not suffer Men to Degenerate exceedingly in their Principles and Practices, and to grow from bad to worse, but still crushed all Impostures ; and discountenanced all Villany and Hypocrisie at it's first setting out in the World, where would be the Patience and Faith of the Saints. of those that believe in God, and take his Word for their Rule and their Comfort, and live in the Expectation of his Promises ? But when Iniquity grows and thrives, and can plead Prescription, and Authority ; when it hath stood long enough to have some Colour for *Antiquity*, and hath obtained interest enough to pretend to a kind of *Universality*, then it will be  
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seen, who they are that love God, and Truth, and Goodness, that are not willing to be deceived, that will take pains to be deceived, that will take pains to be rightly informed; that prefer Truth before Glorious Names, and a good Conscience before Applause and Flattery, and Eternal Life before the Ease and Pleasures of this World. God bears long with all the Provocations of Mankind, for the same reason, that he permits *Heresies*, which is, that they, who are approved, may be made manifest.

For these, and such like reasons as these, God in his Wisdom and Goodness bears with Infinite Patience those Provocations for a long time together, which he could be avenged of in a Moment, and which he utterly abominates; which was the first Observation upon the Text.

2. The second was, That God is so much the more just in the final destruction of Incurable and Obstinate Sinners, when their Iniquity is full and ripe for Vengeance: For as there was the Patience of God seen for four hundred Years together, while the Iniquity of the *Amorites* was growing from bad to worse; so at the end of that Period, the Justice of God was seen, when *their Iniquity was full*. To grow worse for the forbearance of God,

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is the most Criminal Presumption in the World ; and when Men are come to that pass, as quite to forget, that there is a God, or believing him to be ; to perswade themselves, That he either approves, or at least connives at their Impieties ; then the same Wisdom and Goodness, which hitherto had kept off their Punishments, will bring them on swiftly and suddenly ; for as on the one side, if the degeneracy, and the impudence of Sinners should not be suffered to Flourish long, there will be no Tryal of the Faith of Honest Men ; so if it should be suffered to last always, the Temptation would at length grow too hard for them. God exercises his own Patience, that Good Men might exercise theirs ; at length he shows his justice to reward their Patience : The Patience of God is a forbearance guided by Wisdom and Goodness ; and the Justice of God is a Severity, that is also guided by Wisdom and Goodness : And neither the one, nor the other, hath any mixture of that Selfishness, and Passion, which is for the most part the reason, why we sometimes are, and sometimes are not, severe with those that have offended us. This is the true Justice of Punishment, to respect the Evil that is committed, and to Punish for that reason ; and this appears in  
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no instances more, than when God Punishes after long sparing ; For if he had been a Selfish, or a Passionate Being, he had never suffered Men to go on so long together in the most provoking ways of Wickedness, because he had it in his Power to Punish them long before, as he punishes them at last ; and therefore that he Punishes them at last, is an effect of his Wisdom and Goodness, and a Demonstration, that the Common good required it : And as there are several good ends, to which God's Patience tends, in bearing with general Impieties, so long as he often doth ; so there are as many to which his Justice tends in taking Vengeance of them at last : For,

1. This is a Demonstration that his Providence was not asleep before.

2. It is a clear instruction, that Men ought not to presume upon God's Favour, merely because they Prosper in their ways ; but that they should measure his Love, or his Anger, by what they do, and not by what happens to them ; since they who do the same wicked things, may go Unpunished from one Generation to another ; and in this World, but one Generation may suffer for them.

3. That

3. That we should not forget to call our past Sins to remembrance, and to humble our selves before God for them; since if God Punishes *the sins of the Fathers upon the Children* in this Life, the like cause have we to fear, that he will Punish the sins of our Youth, and our Ripper Years, at the Latter end of our Life.

4. That we should make use of the Patience and long suffering of God to our selves, to prevent his Anger from Flaming out against us, because otherwise we *Treasure up Wrath against the day of Wrath, and revelation of the righteous Judgment of God.*

The truth is, these are the uses we ought to make of both those Considerations that I laid before you from the Text, which I shall therefore inculcate again. And,

1. We have no reason to question either the watchfulness of God's Providence, or to be cast into perplexities and doubts, whether the way of Truth, and the way of Error, the way of Virtue and Piety, and the way of Hypocrisie and Wickedness are so different from one another, as is pretended in Religion; we have, I say, no reason to perplex our selves about these things because for many Generations God hath suffered Deceit and Violence to prevail, to spread and to flourish in the World; for  
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## The Eleventh Sermon.

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*God is not as a man, his ways are above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts :* when we look abroad into the World, and look back upon so many past Ages, wherein Religion hath been made a formal pretence for the Establishing of a Worldly Greatness and Dominion upon Gross and Palpable Errours, supported by Fraud and Force, it is foolishly done of us to disquiet our selves with doubts whether we are in the way of the Truth or not, since it pleased God for so long a Time to suffer the contrary to prevail mightily in the World, and for some Ages to baffle all opposition. For this is to suppose God to be such a one as our selves, impatient of high Indignities and great Provocations, ready to kindle upon any notable affront, or however unable to bear repeated, and long-continued injuries. No doubt if our opinion had been asked, the Luxury of the old World should have been mortified by some amazing Judgments, and the Flood should have been spared, the Idolatry of the new Race of Mankind had been prevented, or at least by some Irresistible Evidence of God's displeasure banished, long before the Coming of Christ; and *Mahomet* should either have never appeared, or he should have

have Glared only like a Comet and so gone out, instead of founding so vast, and so long an Empire, as it seems he has done. But let us leave God to rule the World, and be content that he should Rule us; we are too angry, and too passionate to say, how things should have been, and never more foolish, than when we would from God's Providences make conclusions contrary to his Word. It is not for us to say, what the God of Wisdom, the God of Patience, the God of Justice, and of Goodness, and of Infinite Power, should do. It is the least Honour we can give him, to allow every thing to be best, which he doth in the World; every thing to be born with Patience, that he permits; every thing to be done with Faith, and Confidence in him, that he commandeth; and that, as we cannot mend his Word, so neither can we mend his Works, but be content, as we have just reason, to do the one, and submit to the other.

2. No Sinner hath reason to presume upon the Patience of God, or to conclude, *That the wrath of God doth not abide upon him*, because he hath prospered long in an Evil way, and no great Evil hath happened to him. He ought to remember, *That God is not subject to the Passions of Men,*

Men, and doth not serve us, as we are too apt to serve one another ; and as we do, when upon every great Provocation we express a sharp Relentment : God's Punishments are not less certain, because they are more slow than ours. They are not the less certain, because they are not inflicted in Passion, but the more certain : He that punishes, when Wisdom and Goodness requires severity, Punishes more certainly, than he that Punishes but only as he is led by Sudden and Passionate Anger. If therefore thou art Conscious to thy self of deeds highly worthy of Punishment, think of God's Patience, and let the Thought of his Patience work a more reasonable effect in thee, than what is the common effect of it ; let not his Patience make thee secure, but let it make thee Fear, and go away, and humble thy self before him, if peradventure thy Repentance may keep off that Punishment for the future, which his Patience hath kept off hitherto. For,

3. That which we have been speaking of being considered, there is very great reason for us to humble our selves before God for our sins, that have been long since committed ; and that the more, if God hath not yet thought fit to chastise us

us for them ; for there is the more cause to apprehend that he will do so. I have already observed that *God's thoughts are not as our thoughts are* ; and there is this notable instance of it, wherein we are nearly concerned : When we commit any wickedness the thought of it is Troublesome and Grievous to us for the present, unless we have cast off all sense of God, and care of our own Souls ; but by degrees it wears off ; and that which a few days since lay heavy upon our minds, is now grown so light that we do not feel it ; and so the next Sin that wounds our Conscience is felt, perhaps, as the former was, and forgotten at last, as it was too ; and thus we are naturally disposed, not to have the same sense of Sins long ago committed, as of guilt we have lately contracted : But this is an infirmity that is to be corrected by Reason, and a right Knowledge of God : For it is not so with God ; the Evil which thou didst Twenty Years ago, is as fresh in his Remembrance, and lies before him as much to thy disadvantage, as that which was done but Yesterday. God's displeasure doth not wear off, as our trouble doth, though because we are not affected with the Vile Actions that were done a great while since, we are

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apt to flatter our selves, that neither is he so angry with us, as he was : We be- have our selves too often, as if we were ac- countable for none but the last Sins we committed ; we do evil things, and cry God Mercy ; and then we do them again, and go on in this way, as if nothing were upon the score against us, but what troubles us for the present. But we should argue quite contrary. God hath all our wicked Acti- ons in order before him, and therefore we should set them before our own Eyes, and remember, that if we have had our profits without losses, and our pleasures without pains, our sins without punishments, there is the more behind ; and that we are as much in danger of the Sins of our Youth, and all the ills we have done since, as of the latest of all ; for which reason we should say, *Spare us good Lord* ; and from the bottom of our Hearts should confess and be sorry for our former offences, and fear and tremble to add new ones to them : And that is the conclusion we are to make of the whole matter ; to wit,

4. To use the Patience and Long-suf- fering of God for the preventing of his Anger, from Flaming out against us, ei- ther in this World, or in the World to come ; and that by *bringing forth fruits*



meet for repentance, and doing remarkably well in all those kinds, wherein we have formerly done Evil; remembering those words of the Apostle, *Rom. 2. 4. Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the Goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.* Where the Apostle seems to intimate, that this is a matter which Men are ignorant of, or at least, that they mind it not, *viz. that the goodness of God leadeth them to repentance, (i. e.)* the goodness of his Forbearance and Long-suffering. We are all of us sensible, that his threatnings do naturally lead Men to thoughts of amendment; but we are not so well aware, that his forbearance was designed for the same end; though when we come to consider, it is what we shall not be able to deny: For as the reason why God threatens, is because he would have the Punishment avoided, since he that threatens beforehand, doth it, that there may be no occasion of Punishment; so the reason why the threatening is not inflicted presently, is the very same, especially when it is declared expressly, that Repentance will be admitted: I say, the reason of the forbearance is the very same, *viz. That*

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we might have time to Repent, and means to escape: Which use of God's forbearance, as it is necessary for our Salvation in the World to come, so it is the best means of our escaping in this; although that be a concern for which we ought not in any measure to be so Sollicitous, as for the other. When bad Men grow worse and worse, it is a sign that God will visit the World, and no longer bear the indignities that are done to his Holy Name: and therefore the security of good Men must lie in the growing better and better. When God's Patience and Forbearance is extended to all alike, and some are incurable, and grow hardened by it, and others frame themselves to Piety, and Charity, and Dependence upon God more than ever they did before, it is highly probable, that when he finds so great a difference, he will make as great a difference; and for a general instruction, make it plain on both sides, that he will neither fail to Punish the Wicked, nor to Protect the Righteous.

Brethren, let us remember our Profession, which is to believe in God, and consequently to believe, that we are not made safe by Wealth, or by Favour, by Worldly Power, or by Worldly Policy; but that God is more to us, than all these

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things; and that we depend intirely upon him, that by forsaking him, we forsake our strength and defence; that by adhering to him, we have that Power for our Security, and that Goodness for our Security, which made the World, and which Governs the World. Let us, then *in this our day, consider the things that belong to our peace, and seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near, that he may be near unto us in all our Troubles and Adversities, whensoever they oppress us, and be found of us at the hour of Death, and the day of Judgment; that God of Mercy and Love, which in himself he always is, and which he desires to shew himself to be to us all. Let therefore the unrighteous man forsake his ways, and the wicked man his thoughts; and turn unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. To the God of Infinite Goodness let us ascribe all Honour and Glory, now and for ever. Amen.*

## The Twelfth Sermon.

Luke XIII. 5.

*I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

Concerning the Galileans, whose Blood Pilate mingled with their Sacrifices, and the Eighteen Jews upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell and slew them, our Saviour's Discourse to those that were present was this: Suppose ye, that these Galileans, and these Jews were Sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things; and above all men that dwelt at Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

From which words taken in Connexion with what went before, there are two kinds of Observations that may be laid down: The former are rather suppo-

fed than expreffed ; and they are thefe Two,

1. That God is juft in the Punifhments that he inflicts upon Sinners.

2. That by what means foever, evil happensto Men, the Providence of God is concerned in it.

The Second kind are intended more directly, *viz.*

1. That they who fuffer very great Evils, are not always greater Sinners than thofe who in the mean time fuffer nothing.

2. That one reafon why fuch evils do not befall all Perfons at the fame time, who are equally Sinners, is, That while fome are vifited with the Rod, others may take warning by it. And

3. That if they do not take warning, they fhall not efcape.

Thefe are all Profitable Inftuctions, and fuch as this place naturally yields ; which I fhall therefore purfue, without taking much pains to fhew how they are contained in it.

Something I fhall fay, but very briefly, of the Two firft, becaufe they are fupposed in thefe Sayings of our Lord, though

though not the main things intended

The First is, That Punishment is due<sup>e</sup> to Sin; which is the Ground of all that our Saviour discourses here, concerning the ends of those unhappy Men; he knew that his Hearers would be apt to pass an hard Censure upon them, and he took care to prevent it; but they would never have been in danger of running into that extreme, if it had not been fixed in all of them, That Punishment was due to Sin; and this our Saviour was far from correcting, but rather confirmed them in it, by concluding, That they also should *perish, except they repented*. The truth is, this is one of those things, that Men know by Nature; and it is well that they do; for if notwithstanding this sense, the World is so bad, how much worse would it have been, if these apprehensions could have been extinguished? Hence it is, that the Conscience of well-doing inspires a Man with assurance; and that Guilt makes him a Coward; that the disasters of others expose them to be hardly thought of; and that our own Afflictions bring our old sins to remembrance. The Natives of *Melita*, though they were *Barbarians*, yet when they saw a *Viper*

*fasten upon St. Paul's hand, presently concluded, That he was a murderer, whom though he had escaped the Sea, yet vengeance would not suffer to live, Acts 28.* There the natural Sense of Punishment being due to Sin, wrought, though they carried it too far: But with something better reason did *Joseph's Brethren*, when he had brought them into distress, argue with one another, *Verily, we are guilty concerning our Brother, therefore this distress is come upon us, Gen. 42. 21.* It is this natural belief, that supported many Mysteries of Religion every where, in all Ages of the World, whether those Mysteries were of God's appointing, or of Man's inventing. A good part of the Sacrifices and Rites of the Heathens, and the Jews, in their Worship, was to make expiation of Sin; and the Beast was killed, to confess that Punishment was due to that Man for whom it was offered. It is this Sense that disposes Men to believe strange Delusions; that there is virtue in little things, which seem to be no better than Charms to take away the guilt of Sin, and to prevent the Punishment of it: When people wear *Habits*, and go *Pilgrimages*, and touch *Relicks*, and apply *Holy Water*, and twenty other such Remedies to themselves, for the ease of their minds,

## The Twelfth Sermon.

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tho they take a silly way to their end, yet the Principle is good at the bottom, That Sin and Punishment are linked together, and that one naturally draws on the other, if some method be not used to break the Chain; which belief is so troublesome to a guilty mind, that for this reason, the generality of Men are naturally disposed to like a Religion so much the more, for having great variety of Reliefs for an uneasy Conscience; which is the true reason why mankind, if good care be not taken, are ready to run into a thousand Superstitions. To prevent which, and to bring us into the way of Salvation, God sent his own Son into the World to be a Sacrifice for us, that we having so great an assurance of the expiation of our sins, should cheerfully set our selves to the Reformation of our Hearts and Lives, and *serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.* This is the first Observation, That the Principle upon which all this Discourse proceeds, is a natural Truth, viz. That Punishment is due to Sin:

2. That by what means soever evils befall Men, it still comes by the Providence of God, either directly sending it, or at least knowingly permitting it, and for wise and



and good Reasons determining to permit it: This also is evidently presumed in this Discourse; for upon the relation of those disasters, the minds of the hearers presently turned to this Conclusion, That they were very great Sinners that suffered such things, and consequently, that the evil was sent by a Just and Wise Providence: Now this our Saviour did not go about to correct neither, but rather confirmed them in it, that God's hand was in all that happened, as themselves should find it too, if they repented not: So that whether evil comes by the free will of others, as it did upon *the Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their Sacrifices*, or by such means as seem to be merely casual, as it did upon *the eighteen upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell*; in both cases, the Providence of God doth interpose, attending the whole Affair, regulating, and ordering, and with exact knowledge of each circumstance, permitting that which happens, and the means by which it happens: A very instructing Consideration, which we should lay up in our minds, heartily believing it, and frequently entertaining our selves with it, that we may be directed by it in our Prosperity, and comforted with it in our Adversity; for it will give us in our better state, the best direction how to secure it;

it; and to all other methods and ways which we use to keep off evil, it will make us add that which is best of all, to secure by well-doing an Interest in the Favour of God. It is a great defect of Wisdom, as well as of True Religion, to be so nice as we often are, in weighing the means of our welfare, with the causes of danger; and this with respect only to second causes; forgetting all the while, that which ought in the first and chiefest place to be remembered, the Supreme Mover and Orderer even of those Causes, and of the whole matter. But if we laid to heart what we all believe, that it is an unseen hand that governs all, undoubtedly we should be more afraid of our sins, than of all other miseries; and more concerned to be strong in the Favour of God, than in the Arm of Flesh. This consideration is equally good to comfort us under Adversity, if that happens, because God sends it; for tho there may be good reason to take evil in evil part, from Men whoseeldom mean well to us, when they trouble and grieve us; yet there is this to make us patient, that it is of God's sending too, who means us no harm, and will convert it to good, which is the true reason of that excellent saying of Job, ch. 2. v. 10. *Shall we receive good from*

from the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? For the Emphasis lies in these Words, *From the hand of God.* For we rank him in effect with Men, if we cannot be pleased with him; but when he gives us what we desire: When good comes to us, it is welcome from what hand soever it comes; but this is one part of the singular Worship we pay to God, that from him we can receive evil too, without suspecting either the Goodness of his Intention, or the Wisdom of his Counsel.

These are the Two Points which lye at the bottom of this Discourse of our Saviour, *viz.* That Punishment belongs to Sin; and, That the Evils which happen in this World, do not happen without the Providence of God attending upon all the Circumstances thereof.

I proceed now to those points which are the direct, purpose of this place; whereof the

1. Is, That they who suffer very great Evils are not always greater Sinners than those who in the mean time suffer nothing: That is the plain Doctrine of our Saviour, expressed in these Questions, *Suppose ye that these were greater sinners, than all the Galileans? and these, than all that dwell at Jerusalem?* They indeed

that heard him, being Jews, were ready enough so to suppose; but this was that Error of theirs, which he in the first place designed to correct; and it was necessary for them to be set right in this matter by some great Authority, because it was an Error so easie for them to slide into, by reason of the Temper and Constitution of their Law, which to them that kept it, promised all the good things of this Life, and threatned all the evils of Life to them that broke it: But the time was now coming, when these considerations should not be so much regarded, and God would establish a Covenant upon promises of an higher nature than those of the Law of Moses, and upon more terrible penalties than that were threatned by that Law: And therefore this plain Doctrine of our Saviour, which no doubt was something surprizing to his Hearers, was very seasonable to be delivered, just when that Law was expiring, and a better was to take place: The time was coming, when *all that would live godly in Christ Jesus should suffer Persecution*; when his Disciples should be *bated of all men for his names sake, and deliver'd up to be beaten, and scourged, and put to death*; Which when they should see, they would have  
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reason to remember that he had told them, upon a particular occasion, that they were not to call them the greatest Sinners, who suffered such things, as so many together never endured before; but there was a notorious Provocation of Divine Justice to deserve it. Now there were greater designs in hand, than to keep a small Nation, in comparison, to the observation of a Law, that required abundance of Ceremony, and was content with the outward work, which served to an happy Life in this World. The true rules of Righteousness and Charity were now to be laid down, and Men were to learn to live above the World, and to be brought to the Practice of Piety, by the Promises of Immortality in a future State; to reward them for any thing they should lose or suffer for it, in this: It would therefore be expedient, that the power of this Faith should be sometimes demonstrated, to the Glory of God, and the Instruction of Man, and that by examples of constancy in suffering for Righteousness; it would also be expedient, that the Profession of so holy a Faith should not be dishonoured by the continual scandals of Men, whose Conversation is quite contrary to their Profession; and therefore that God should purify

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his Church in the Furnace of Affliction, and sometimes separate the Sincere from the Hypocrite, by bringing them to the Test of Persecution, that those who hang loosely upon the Christian Communion, might be shaken off, and none but good examples left in it, to bring greater Credit to the Gospel, and more Profelytes to it, than it had before. Since therefore the Time was coming, when Men should suffer not at all, as Sinners or Evil doers, but for a good Cause, and with a good Conscience, most certainly it was a reasonable Instruction, that the greatest Sufferers were not to be accounted the greatest Sinners.

But this, I confess, is a Reason that doth not reach the full intention of our Saviour, in the Doctrine he laid down upon this occasion mentioned in the Text; for his true Disciples in suffering for their Faith and Profession, cannot be said to suffer for their Sins; but his words considered with all the circumstances wherewith they are to be taken, do suppose that when Men suffer for their sins, they are not to be accounted greater sinners merely for that reason, than those who at the same time escape, and suffer nothing; for when he said, that neither should they escape that heard him,

him, unless they repented ; it was implied, or at least not denied, that those things happened to the aforesaid *Galileans* and *Jews*, as a Punishment of their Sins ; and a plain case it is, that in this Life where *the Tares and the Wheat grow together*, that by the same Afflictions, God punishes the Sins of some, while he manifests the Sincerity of others ; and in this case it remains true, that those who are punished, are not to be accounted greater sinners than all those that escape ; of which we need not desire any other proof than our Saviour's word for it : But in some cases we have very evident and sensible demonstration of it : For sometimes God punishes the sins of some Men by the hands of others that are worse than they, whom he reserves for far greater Punishments in this Life, as the Histories of the Church do abundantly testify : Now by the same reason, that it must not be concluded of those that suffer under the oppressions of others, that they are worse than those that oppress them, it ought not neither to be concluded of those that do not suffer by them, that they are worse than those that do ; for the former observation is an evident proof that they do not suffer first, who deserve it most. Which is a Doctrine

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that

## *The Twelfth Sermon.*

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that our Saviour thought fit to deliver in his days, and will be of constant use, while the World Lasts, to keep Christians at the greatest distance from that Jewish Errour, That Men may discern God's Love and Hatred by what befalls them in this World. I will therefore never suffer my self to be run into an ill opinion of any Man, or any People, by any adversity, how great soever it be, which happens to them before my eyes; much less will I enter into comparisons; I will not conclude from the Affliction I see, that there must needs be some great sin at the bottom, which Vengeance has found out: And when I see the sin and cannot forbear acknowledging the justice of God, I will not go on to suppose, there is something more than I do see, and make him to be a worse Man than he seems to be; nor will I conclude, that he is worse than those, that do not suffer such things: And what construction I will forbear to make of a single Person, I will much more forbear to make of Multitudes: Because I know the reasons of God's Proceedings with Peoples and Nations, and great bodies of Men, are by me unsearchable, and that time discovers that Wisdom of his Counsels, which my reason cannot fathom: In a word, I will conclude ill of none,

Y because



because they suffer, but rather well of them, if I know no cause to the contrary, because it is often God's method to afflict his own best Servants, and when he Punishes for Sin, to begin with those that do not most of all deserve it. Shall I conclude, for instance, that the *French* Protestants have been the greatest Sinners of all the Protestants in *Europe*, or greater than our selves, because they have suffered such things? God forbid! I speak not of those, who to their Glory in this World, but alas, that is little worth, it becomes me to say, and you to hear it, who to their Praise with God, and to the encrease of their reward hereafter in a better Life, have suffered the loss of all things, to keep a good Conscience: but of those whom the Terrors of this World have prevailed with, more than the *Terrors of the Lord*; in whom the desire of ease here, hath been too hard for the desire of Salvation hereafter; I will not say, and we must not say, that even these were greater Sinners than our selves, who have not fallen into their Temptations. Such instances as these, Brethren, do best explain the intention of our Saviour in these words, and will affect us with the true sense of them, and the more that we look abroad into the World, and consider the unsearch-

ableness

ableness of God's Judgments, and that *his ways are past finding out*, as we cannot but do, if we ask our selves the reason why this and that happens ; the more sensibly we shall acknowledge the Truth of our Saviour's Doctrine in this place, and shall forbear passing Judgment upon the unhappy, merely because they are so. But yet to take notice of what God doth of this kind in the World, is not an unprofitable observation, and that because the second point of the three, which I have mentioned, is as true as the first, and that is this.

2. That one reason why the Evils of this Life do not befall all Persons at the same time, who are equally Sinners, is, That while some are visited with the Rod of God, others may take warning by it : This Proposition I lay down with great confidence, not only of the Truth of it in general, but also of the pertinence of it to the Text : For you may observe, that our Saviour upon mention made of the former of the two Tragical Stories, observes the latter himself, and takes occasion from thence to divert his hearers from censuring those miserable Persons, as they were ready to do, and to employ them in reflecting upon themselves : *Tell you, nay : but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish* : he employed them in

reflecting upon their own sins; for says he, *except ye repent*; and upon their own danger, *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*. And now I am sure it will be granted, that our Saviour did not wander from the true intent of God's Providence in the things that happened to those Persons, nor make an application of them, which was not to the purpose; and therefore since he gave warning by their examples, it remains true, as I said, that one reason why the Evils of this Life do not befall all Persons at the same time who equally deserve them, and I will add, who equally need them, is this, That while some are corrected, others may be instructed: I rather keep to the case of Punishing Sin, than trying Virtue, because that is the case of the Text; though I might say too, that the reason why all that can bear a tryal, are not tryed at the same time is, because the tryals of some righteous Men are not only profitable to themselves, but the examples of them also are profitable to other good Men to encourage and fortifie them. But when God punishes, he doth not at one and the same Time, punish all that deserve it equally, but he punishes some, that the rest may take warning; for if the sufferings of a few in comparison, would instruct all the rest,

rest, Gods end is gained, which is, that we should learn righteousness, when his judgments are abroad in the Earth: And this is one of those arguments which may convince us, that *God doth not willingly afflict and grieve the Children of Men*; for if he took pleasure in that, then without question where there was the same cause, there would be the same effect of his displeasure; and where the same need appeared, the same remedy would be used; but if where all might justly be punished, he uses his Prerogative to punish some only, and for the time spares the rest, to prove and try them, whether the examples of his Justice upon others will bring them to Repentance; in this case it plainly appears, that he delights not in that which is grievous to us, but would bring us to Repentance at the same time, by shewing his Justice upon some, and his Patience towards others. We can indeed give no account why God begins to afflict this Man, and not that; this People, and not another; but the general point is very obvious (*i.e.*) why all are not made to suffer together, where there is the same Provocation of Divine Justice, and the same need of being awakened to Repentance; for the reason of it, is this, That the Punishment of some

is a sufficient warning to others ; and God does not afflict all at once, because he doth not willingly afflict the Children of Men: For mark our Saviour's arguing in this place : There were among the *Galileans* as great Sinners, as those whose Blood *Pilate* mingled with their Sacrifices : There were among the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, as great Sinners, as those were upon whom the Tower of *Siloam* fell ; and yet those calamities happened but to a few ; The use that he would have the rest make of those Examples, was this, That they should repent ; which he urged by this threatening, *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*: Now he that threatens to punish and has power to do it, doth plainly show, that he takes no delight in punishing, but would prevent the fault that deserves it ; especially, when he threatens and shews Examples of Justice at the same time, and might have made those Examples of his Justice too, whom he threatens. And so I proceed to the third Proposition, Which is,

3. That if those who escape from the Punishment, do not take warning by those that suffer, themselves shall not always escape ; and this is the direct purport of the Words, *I tell you, nay : but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish* ; and that  
by

by *Perishing* here, our Lord meant the Punishments of this Life, is plain from hence, that he threatned such like destruction, as happened to those few *Galileans*, and those few upon whom the Tower of *Siloam* fell. Ye shall all likewise Perish, (*i. e.*) much after the same manner, as indeed it happened, and that to admiration; For as the Blood of those *Galileans* was mingled with their Sacrifices; so was the Blood of those Paschal Sacrifices, which they came to offer just before the *Roman* Army hemm'd them in; and as those eighteen were killed by the fall of the Tower of *Siloam*, so were the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem* destroyed in the destruction of *Jerusalem* itself. Although the Covenant of the Gospel was established upon better promises, and with more frightful Penalties than those of this World; yet the Providence of God doth not neglect the bringing Men to Repentance by the good and evil of this Life; nay it is necessary to the maintaining a sense of God, and a World to come, even amongst Christians, That his displeasure should be seen, where his goodness doth not lead to repentance; and it his goodness, that by his Judgments he doth awaken us, when nothing else is able to do it. And therefore although the great mo-

tives of Christianity are those that concern another Life ; yet when these do not prevail, the only remedy that is left, is to instruct us by present corrections, and to touch us in those things, of which we are most sensible, *viz.* The present concerns of this World. If therefore, after he hath made some examples to others, these do not Repent, it is still more necessary that they should not escape, because they have abused the long-suffering of God towards themselves, and taken no warning by those, whom God Chastened, while he spared them : For if their obstinacy should go without Punishment, the example of their Impunity would do more hurt to succeeding Generations, than if there had been no warnings given at all ; and for this reason, the sufferings of those Sinners that were made the first examples, are commonly less than theirs, that would learn no instruction by them, as it happened to the *Jews* Forty Years after this warning that our Saviour gave them, upon so instructing an occasion.

The use we are to make of these considerations, is, To do the same thing, which we should certainly do, if God's Judgments were upon us, as they are upon others, that we also perish not : For if we would *judge*

*our*

our selves, we should not be judged; and if the warning that God gives us by others, hath the same effect, that correction it self would have upon us, God who doth not willingly grieve the Children of Men, would spare us, and not enter into Judgment with us. It is but considering how we should be disposed by great affliction and bringing our minds to that temper without it, and then the great design of Divine Corrections and Punishments is attained without Punishment. And how are Men wrought upon by Calamities? excepting some few who are such wretches as *Ahab* was, who in his distress sinned yet more and more. These are the common effects: In general, they begin then to call their sins to mind, and their Consciences bring forth the guilt, that hath been for the most part quiet, and do set their evil ways in order before them: Nay, then they are very willing to acknowledge, that what they suffer, is no more than what they deserve, but a great deal less: Thus as I insinuated at first, *Joseph's* Brethren, when they felt the anguish of mind, that their present distress cast them into, could then say, *Verily we were guilty concerning our Brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, and would not hear him.* It is not to be thought but that



that after so Treacherous and Villanous a part, as the selling of *Joseph* was, their Consciences had pulled every one of them for it at certain times; but it is likely they made a shift to forget it, as much as they could from time to time, till they fell into that perplexity, which their Brother cast them in; and then they talk to one another about their Sin freely and sorrowfully, as if they had all along dissembled their sense of it to one another before; *Verily we are guilty concerning our Brother.* This is one end of God's Chastisements, to bring those to an effectual acknowledgment of their evil ways, who till then had smothered the Conviction of their Guilt; and that is one end too of God's warnings, when some are made examples of his justice, and he spares others to prove them, whether they will be warned by such examples. Again, when we feel anguish our selves, we remember how we have for a long time abused the Patience of God, and *turned his Grace into wantonness*; then our Luxury and Intemperance, whilst we had plenty of all things for this Life, and our neglect of Instruction and Admonition under all means of Grace for a better Life; then I say these things come to mind: And if God spares us, whilst he  
smites

smites others, it is that we may not need any thing more, than such a warning, to make us reflect upon these things as we ought to do. Thus also God's Corrections dispose Men to Charity and Consideration of one another ; they cure us of that stiffness and wantonness, which, whilst all things go well with us, carries on Contention and Hatred : And therefore that we may not make it necessary for Providence to teach us Wisdom and Charity by withdrawing those bounties of his, which we abuse to the pampering of Pride and Obstinacy, we should learn to be wise by Examples, before we are made Examples our selves.

To conclude this matter, who can be Ignorant that Affection drives those Men to Prayer, and other Duties of Piety, who were very careless of them before ? *In their distress they will seek God early,* though in their Prosperity they were so backward to any thing of Religion, and for the most part felt very faint and ineffectual dispositions to it, rather complying with custom, than with Inclination and Conscience ; and Honouring God *with their lips, while their hearts are far from him :* and this is the great danger of a Prosperous State, to be full and to forget God.

But

But if nothing else will cure this Sloathfulness in Religion, and this indifference and coldness in the Service of God, yet at least Affliction doth it, which makes us to feel our Dependance upon God, and shows us, that we have no hope left but in him, and then we abound in Prayers, and we attend willingly to instruction; we apply our selves to God in good earnest, and to all the Comforts of Religion; we make many Vows and Promises, and we set our selves immediately to perform them: This is the Natural effect of sufferings, when we feel them our selves; and if we are wise, it should be the effect of all those warnings that God hath given us by the sufferings of others: Since therefore we cannot look abroad into the World, but we shall see the *Judgments of God in the Earth*. let us learn *Righteousness*, let us *not be high minded but fear*; let us not judge others, but judge our selves, and often consider, what our Saviour replied to the supposition of their being Sinners above all others, who suffered such things, as others had not suffered; *I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

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## The Thirteenth Sermon.

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Luke XVIII. 8.

*Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh,  
shall he find faith on the Earth?*

FOR the understanding of these words of our Saviour, two things are to be considered.

1. What is here meant by the *Coming of the Son of man.* And

2. What is meant by his *not finding Faith upon the Earth.*

1. How we are to understand those words, *when the Son of man cometh?* I answer, the meaning is, when he cometh to Execute Judgment upon the ungodly, and to deliver his Faithful People out of their Hands: For after our Saviour had spoken the Parable of the Unjust Judge, that was wearied by the Widows importunity to do Justice for her against her adversaries,

saries he argued thus, *v. 7. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night to him, though he bear long with them?* or rather, as it might have been translated, *and will he bear long in their cause?* I tell you, *that he will avenge them speedily:* And then follow these words, *Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh (i. e.)* when he cometh to do that which was spoken of before, *viz. to avenge the cause of his elect,* or to Punish their Enemies and Oppressors, and to deliver them out of their hands.

Now of the *Coming of Christ* for this purpose, there is also a twofold signification in the New Testament, whereof one is manifestly the Principal, and much more considerable than the other, and that is, his second coming in Person to Judge the Quick and the Dead, which will not be till the end of the World: Thus the coming of the *Day of the Lord*, *2. Pet. 3. 10. is called his coming, v. 4. and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, with all his Saints, 1 Thes. 3. 13. and in many other places.* And this is all the *coming of Christ* properly so called, that the New Testament mentions after his First, because this only is to be his second Personal Appearance. But then,

2. There was another notion of the *coming of Christ*, after his first, which is also

also plainly enough intimated in the New Testament, and that was his Coming to destroy the Jews, and to deliver the Christians out of their hands, which happened 40 Years after his death: And of this the 24<sup>th</sup> Chapter of *St. Matthew* is an undeniable Testimony, where a Description of the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and a Description of the Day of Judgment are so interwoven one with the other, that it is a matter of some difficulty to know punctually and fully, what is proper to the one, and what to the other: But plain it is, that the one as well as the other, is called *the Coming of the Son of Man*, as appears by Verses 27, and 37. The Destruction of *Jerusalem* was made as it were a Type or Figure of the Day of Judgment; and therefore these words are there, *Verily I say unto you, this Generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilled, v 34. (i. e.)* till they are accomplished in that part of the meaning which respects the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, which was destroyed before that Generation passed away. Of this it seems plain that *St. James* speaks, *C. 5. v. 6. 7.* where speaking to the Jews, says he, *Ye have condemned and killed the just*; and to the Christians, *Be patient therefore, Brethren, unto the Coming of the Lord*;

Lord; and v. 8. *Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts for the Coming of the Lord draweth nigh*; and some other places there are, where the Phrase is to be Interpreted thus; particularly that, *Let your moderation be known unto all men, The Lord is at hand, Phil. 4. 5.* (i. e) let all Men see by your Meekness and Patience under those Oppressions, which you suffer, that you believe those Predictions, which we have delivered to you from Christ, that he is at hand to deliver you; and although properly the end of all things will not be till the last day, when the *Earth shall be burnt up*, and all the works that are therein; yet because this notable revolution of the destruction of the Jews was in some degree like unto it, therefore it was also called the *end of all things*, meaning the end of the Jewish State and Religion, which was to be accompanied with manifest Tokens of God's Favour to the Christians, and of his indignation at their Enemies. And thus we are to understand that passage in St. Peter, *The end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober and watch unto Prayer, 1 Pet. 4. 7.* Not that this was in a strict and proper sense the *Coming of Christ*, because he did not come in Person as he will do at the last day; but in some sense it might

might be so called, because he Appeared by his Power and Providence to do the same work in part, which will with incomparably greater perfection be done at the last, (*i. e.*) to take Vengeance of the ungodly, and to save his own People: For the Incurribleness of the Jewish Nation, and their incurable hatred of the Truth, and obstinate Persecution of it, was dreadfully punished in the destruction of *Jerusalem*; and the Christians had not only all escaped out of it, before the *Roman Army* came against it, but by the destruction of it, they gained also a very considerable rest from Persecution for some time after.

And now the reason why this wonderful Providence was called the *Coming of Christ*, seems plainly to be this, That after his Ascension into Heaven, he set down at the right hand of God, and had all Power put into his hands; and therefore because it is he that Governs the World as well as the Church; such remarkable revolutions, as that was, for the destruction of his enemies, and the saving of his Servants, are called the *coming of Christ*; God hath given him to be head over all things to the Church, and therefore such passages, as that was, are called his *coming*, to signify that they are the effects of his Providence and Govern-



ment, for the good of his Church, no less, than if he had come in Person to order them, as he will do at the end of the World, to order all things then.

And for this reason then, though in the proper sense of his coming, he will come but once at the end of the World, yet in this improper sense of it, his appearance to destroy his enemies, and to save his People, that trust in him, nothing hinders, but that he may be said to come often before the end of the World, (*i. e.*) as often as his Providence doth signally and remarkably appear for this purpose: And thus we are to understand the coming of the Lord in 2 *Thes.* 2. 8. where it is said of the *Man of Sin, that Wicked one*, That the *Lord shall consume him with the Spirit of his mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of his coming*; which being to be done, before the Personal coming of Christ to Judgment the meaning must be, that his destruction shall be so remarkably the work of a Divine Providence, that all shall confess it was not the effect of Worldly Policy, but no less the doing of the Lord, than if himself had come in Person to destroy him. And whenever *the Kingdoms of the World become the Kingdoms of the Lord*; when the knowledge of God covers the earth,

as the waters cover the Sea; when those magnificent predictions are fulfilled concerning the universal prevalence of Truth and Goodness amongst Men, with which the Old and New Testament are plentifully furnished, and which are to be fulfilled, before the coming of Christ to the last Judgment; then also is it true, that the Lord comes, (*i. e.*) by the Power of his Spirit and Providence to renew and reform a degenerate World, that was running headlong into perdition.

And thus much concerning the sense of these words, *when the Son of man cometh*, which I have shown do principally signify that great and amazing revolution, when he shall come by coming in his own Person at the last day to judge the World, but in a secondary sense do also signify the remarkable works of his Providence, in Punishing some, and saving others even in this Life.

Now,  
1. How are we to understand that other clause, *will he find Faith upon the Earth?* The meaning of the question is plainly this; That he will not find Faith on the Earth, or very little in comparison. But what is here meant by Faith? I answer, that is easily discerned by the Parable and the Application of it, that went before.

The design of both which, was to infer the conclusion in the foregoing verse, *And shall not God avenge his own Elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them; I tell you he will avenge them speedily*: That is to say, God would hear the Prayers of Righteous Men, and in a little time take their cause into his own hand; and then says our Saviour, *Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* (i. e.) notwithstanding the Promises of God to hear the Prayers of good Men, and to interpose for them that depend upon him, there will be but little Faith in these Promises found upon the Earth even when the Son of Man comes to fulfil them: The greatest part will not be found to believe any thing at all of them, and so will be surprized with that day, without any preparation for it, or expectation of it. Many will yield to the Temptations of this present World, and throwing off their dependance upon God, will think to secure themselves by Flattery and Hypocrisy from the Violence of Wicked Men; others will despair of any better state of things; and very few will lay to heart the promises which God hath made to hear the Prayers of his Servants and to save them: Few will strengthen

themselves in God by crying to him day and night, and by putting their whole trust and confidence in him; and this notwithstanding the clear and strong reasons they have from his word, so to do. *Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth;* And thus we may from other places of Scripture observe, that immediately before the Day of judgment, there will be a great falling away from Christian Piety and Charity; nay, and the World should begin once more to depart from the Purity of Faith; *many false Prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many; and because Iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.* But, says our Saviour, *he that endures to the end, shall be saved;* thereby intimating, that it would be some matter of difficulty to endure to the end. Thus also St. Peter tells us, that *there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?* which is plainly meant of the Day of Judgment, before which according to the Revelation of St. John, *Satan was to be loosed for a little time, and to go out, and to deceive the nations, and to gather them together against the City of God.* And therefore it will be remarkably true at the day of Judgment,

that when the Son of Man cometh, he will find but little Faith in the Earth ; The World will be in a careless Posture, as it was before, that the Flood came and took them all away : And for the same reason there is but little Faith in the earth when God enters into Judgment with the World for the violence and iniquities of Men, and asserts the cause of innocence and righteousness against them ; for in all such cases the temptations to unbelief and apostacy, are very great, and likely to prevail upon many of those that believe ; so that this is the meaning, That in such a wicked Age, as calls for the coming of the Son of Man, the open enemies of God, which are the greater number, will be void of all regard whatsoever to his word and to his Providence, or if they take any notice of it, it is that of the Scoffers mentioned by St. Peter, who will say, *Where is the promise of his coming ?* Many of his professed Servants will be weary of depending upon him, and give way to Temptations, and depend more upon the arm of Flesh, than upon the promise of God ; and the Faith of many good Men will be very much weakened and abated ; so that when he cometh, he will find but little Faith upon the Earth.

And

And thus I perswade my self to have given you a true illustration of these remarkable words of our Blessed Saviour, and that upon the two significations of the Son of Man's Coming, which seem to be both intended in this Text; and indeed it is very hard to know which was principally intended, the day of the General Judgment, or the Destruction of *Jerusalem*: The Day of General Judgment is in it self the principal meaning of Christ's Coming, and therefore ought not to be excluded; but yet the Parable, with the Application of it, being manifestly intended to stir up that Generation to *pray to God, and not to faint*, and to give a firm Faith to the Promises of God, notwithstanding the great troubles they were like to meet with from the unbelieving *Jews*: therefore neither could the Coming of the Son of Man to be avenged of these his enemies, and to deliver his Servants, be excluded, but was as directly intended, as the other.

And now I proceed to observe the two main Points which the Text supposes, besides those which it affirms; and the considering of them will not a little contribute to a more perfect understanding of this place.

1. It is supposed manifestly, that after the first Coming of Christ to call the World to repentance, and to be offered up for our sins, there would yet be degenerate Ages sometimes, and a most corrupt state of things, before his second Personal Coming to judge the World.

2. It is also supposed, that his Providence would then appear to set all things right, when there was the greatest need to interpose in behalf of his Church.

1. That his first coming would not infallibly prevent the degeneracy and corruption of future Ages: For notwithstanding that evidence of Truth, which he taught, *many false Prophets would arise, and deceive many*; and notwithstanding the Power of his Doctrine, *iniquity would abound, and the love of many would wax cold*; and notwithstanding both these advantages, yet his own servants would sometimes be reduced to that state, that it should be needful to them to cry unto God day and night; which is a matter that may cause some wonder, if we do not consider the reason of it: That the Principles and Manners of Men were so often, and so generally corrupted, before the Coming of the Son of God into the

the World, is that, which might not appear strange at all, to those that consider the weakness and folly of Mankind : That after the Creation, the Earth should so abound with Luxury and Violence, that God swept all Mankind away with the Flood, but Eight Persons : That after *Noah's* Family had peopled the Earth again, Men should fall into Idolatry so universally, that God called *Abraham* out of his own Country, and entred into a particular Covenant with him, for the maintaining of the true Worship in his Family and Posterity : That *Pharaoh* should oppress the *Israelites* after his Country had been saved by them : That the *Israelites* should fall to Worship other Gods, after that the True God had wrought so many miraculous Deliverances for them : That when, not without much ado, they were cured of Idolatry, they should fall into scandalous ways of Hypocrisie and Immorality. These and the like things, perhaps, are not so much to be wondred at, because God had not as yet used the last means to instruct Mankind, and to oblige them to Piety and Vertue ; but that there should be Times as bad as the worst of those, after Christ himself had appeared in the World to die for Sinners, and to bring the Doctrine of Salvation to Man.



Mankind, with the most convincing Evidence that could be desired, and with the most powerful Motives that could be thought of; that notwithstanding all this, Oppression, Violence, Fraud, Hypocrisie, Error, Superstition, Idolatry, and scandalous Examples, should for some Ages reign no less than before the Times of Christ, and to that degree, as to shake the Faith even of good Men; and if it were possible, to deceive the very best of all; this seems to be an amazing Consideration; and tho' the Noble Examples of Christian Piety and Vertue that have appeared in the World, and the assured Expectation of a larger Progress that Christianity will make in the Earth, and of better Effects that it will produce, may answer the Objection; yet that the World, that the Church, should be so bad under the last means, is what may raise some admiration: But you are to consider, That when our Lord first came into the World, he came not to establish a Religion, which should either by its Truth convince, or by its Power reform Mankind, whether they would or no; but what was sufficient for both purposes, if they would be wise and honest, and suffer the Concernments of Eternal Life to prevail with them above  
their

their worldly Interests ; and therefore there was as much reason to expect an Universal Reformation, as to expect that Men would not resist the Evidence of Truth, in Matters of the greatest concern to them in the whole World ; but to bring them to this, the Gospel was furnished with no irresistible means, but left them under the natural liberty they had before, with a provision of Grace, that might be resisted ; and therefore it was in itself likely that the Truth would be opposed by some, and corrupted by others, and by many *beld in unrighteousness* ; that several to whom it was propounded, would not believe it, and several that believed it, would not obey it ; and in time, that it would be mixed with Errors and Superstitions, and framed to the Designs of Ambition and Covetousness ; nay, the better and more Divine a Religion that of the Gospel is, the more violently it would be opposed by some, and the more certainly corrupted by others : So that if we consider the Excellency of the Gospel, with the Purpose of God not to overbear the World into the Faith and Obedience of it, by forcing the natural Liberty of Men, it had rather been much more strange, if it had escaped opposition and corruption, than

than to have been both opposed and corrupted as it hath : Thus our Blessed Saviour himself, and his Apostles, foretold that it would be : *Take heed, lest no man deceive you ; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many ; many false Prophets shall arise, and deceive many ; and if any one shall say unto you, Lo here is Christ, and there is Christ, believe it not ; for there shall arise false Christs, and false Prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch, that if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect : Behold I have told you before.* Thus he foretold how Christianity should be corrupted by Impostures and Frauds : Again, says he, *They shall deliver you up to be afflicted and killed, and ye shall be hated of all nations for my names sake ; and then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.* Thus he foretold the violence that should be used to extinguish the Profession of the Truth. Again, saith St. Paul, 2 Thess. 2. *There shall be a falling away, and the man of sin shall come with all deceiveableness of unrighteousness in them that perish. because they received not the Love of the Truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that*  
*they*

they should believe a lie, that they might all be damned, who believe not the Truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. There he foretells a fearful Apostasie from the Purity and Simplicity of the Christian Profession. Again, says he, 2 Tim. 3. 1, 2. *This know, that in the last days perilous times shall come : For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God : There he foretells a terrible corruption of Manners : And again, 1 Tim. 4. 1, 2, 3. The Spirit speaketh expressly, says he, that in the latter times some shall depart from the Faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisie, having their conscience seared with an hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the Truth. Now lay all these things together, and here is as plain warning, as can possibly be given, of most corrupt and degenerate Times, even after Christ's first coming ;*

ming ; and so that is expressly foretold, which the Text evidently supposes : For here would be glorious pretences to deceive, violence to compel, and wicked Examples to offend the Disciples of Christ. And what provision hath our Lord left to secure them from being misled, where there is so much danger ? They are to attend to the Doctrine, which he delivered us at first by his Holy Apostles, to secure themselves from being deceived ; they must lay to Heart the Promises of the Gospel, to arm themselves against the Temptations of the World, and the Power of Evil Examples ; and they are to consider, that all these things were foretold by our Lord himself, and his Apostles, that they might not be scandalized, when they should happen, nor be tempted to suspect, that either Christianity was not of God from the first ; or at least, that our Lord has neglected all care of it since, because it doth so little good, as yet, in the World ; because it runs out into so many Errors, and because the Truth of it is so vehemently opposed ; for, says our Saviour, *Behold, I have told you before.* But still it is in their power, whether they will take warning by such Predictions, and whether they will guard themselves against Errors and

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Evil Examples ; and therefore a very corrupt State of Things in the Christian World, will, in all likelihood, shake the Faith of many Believers, and cause some to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them, not regarding the admonitions of Christ and his Apostles before-hand : and so when Christ comes, he will find but little Faith upon the Earth ; And this is the Observation which in the first place is unavoidable from the Text : That even after Christ, there would be degenerate Ages ; for this is plainly supposed, as the cause why there would be but little Faith found, when he should come to visit the Earth, for the Iniquities and Offences it abounds with. The

1. Supposition is, That the Providence of our Lord would then appear to set things right, when there was the greatest need to interpose in behalf of his Church : For whereas it is said, *When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth ?* It is intimated manifestly, that his coming is then to be expected, when little Faith is to be found amongst Men ; and consequently, when Scandals and Temptations are so strong, that it is an hard matter to bear up against them. I have said already, that the Evidence of Christianity doth not make all

all Men receive it ; and that the Power of Christianity doth not make all that receive it, wise and good Men ; and it is not to be denied, but that amongst Christians themselves, there are as monstrous Errors, and leud Examples, as ever there were in the World before Christianity, or as there are now where Christianity is not at all professed. Now at this rate, should the Lord of the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ, let things go as they would, it would in time come to pass, that nothing of Christianity would remain in the World, but the name of it, and that for no other purpose but to do more hurt with it, than could be done without it. But how is it, that Divine Providence will interpose, or according to the expression of the Text, that *the Son of man will come*, and will make good his Promise of being *with his Church to the end of the World* ; which is never more remarkably fulfilled, than when he interposes in those Circumstances, which make Men think, that he will not interpose, and that he is not at all concerned, what becomes of the State of Religion, or the Affairs of the Church ? Because our Lord hath not made the Gospel an irresistible means of convincing Unbelievers, and reforming wicked Men, therefore it would in time be

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needful, that in order to the keeping up of true Religion, and making Christians such as they ought to be, that he, I say, should by his Providence correct his own Disciples, and reduce wretched Mankind into an unavoidable necessity of consideration, that Truth and Righteousness should not utterly fail from among the Children of Men. When there is the greatest danger of losing the true Profession of Christianity, our Lord will not be wanting to maintain it: When *all Flesh had corrupted their ways*, God came and swept away Mankind with a Flood, and saved Noah to be the Father of a new and better Generation: When their Prosperity had corrupted their ways, he called *Abraham* forth to preserve True Religion in him, and in his Family; and these, and the like Providences are Pledges of the same Care to interpose in behalf of Truth and Righteousness, when the Faithful seem to fail from among the Children of Men. While God seems to let the World alone, and to suffer all Men to go on in their own ways, as if he took no notice of them, nor were at all concerned what they did, he is all the while trying and proving what they are, not indeed for his own Information, for he knows all things; but for the in-

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struction of those that are to come after. If he at every turn should interpose, when we think it needful, we should very seldom know, who are sincere, and who are Hypocrites; it is very fit, that it should be sometimes seen, whether Men are what they pretend to be, whether indeed they are concerned for that Truth, for which they have once pretended a mighty zeal; whether they are Governed by Conscience, as they say, or by mere Worldly and Politick Considerations; for such Discoveries as these are very instructing, and serve for the bringing about of much good in the World, and in the Church; which we may reasonably presume to be one cause why, when the Son of Man comes, he will find but little Faith upon the Earth, because while he suffers the World to go on, as if he minded it not, he is trying those that pretend to Faith, and upon the Tryal many are discovered not to have it. In short, Divine Providence is so far from being regardless of the Affairs of Men, that it then most of all shews itself, when Men are tempted to think, that it regards nothing (*i. e.*) when there is but little Faith to be found in the Earth; and this will be abundantly demonstrated at the close of all things, that is, at the Day of Judgment, which

which will be the most convincing Act of Providence, that ever was in the World, and one Fore-runner of it, will be that Question, *Where is the promise of his coming?*

And now the use of all ought to be that, which is the declared intention of our Saviour in the beginning of the Parable: And he spake a parable to them, to the end, *that men ought always to pray, and not to faint*: For the true Ground of Prayer, is Faith in the Providence, and Promises of God; and if there be no time, when these fail, then ought Men always to pray, and not to faint (*i. e.*) they ought always to depend upon God's Providence, they ought always to believe his Promises, they ought always to be certain that their Prayers are heard, and will turn to good account for them; that God is gracious to all, and much more to them that love and serve him; and if they do all this, then they will *always pray, and not faint*, (*i. e.*) and not be discouraged: And if they ought always to pray, then also, when they are most apt to be discouraged, and when there is but little Faith to be found upon the Earth: nay, then most of all, because when Temptations to Unbelief are greatest, we should the most of all streng-

then our selves by recourse to God, and dependance upon him.

To this *Instance in Prayer*, there are two things must go.

1. A stedfast resolution to walk in all the ways of God, and not to be diverted out of them by any Worldly Interest whatsoever: For he can have no Faith to go to God, who thinks of taking care for himself, without regard to his Duty to God: A man is not in a condition to seek the Favour of God, or to commend his case to him, that contrives how to shift for himself without him.

2. A perfect resignation of himself to the Will of God; for by this also it is, that a Man entitles himself to his Favour and Blessing. The most effectual way to obtain the particular Blessings we pray for at any time, if they are such things as may prove evil as well as good for us, is to leave the matter, after all, to the disposal of Divine Providence; for then if we obtain them, we get his Blessing with them too; if we do not, we are sure to get his Blessing without them, which is the general thing we pray for always: With these Dispositions we are in a fit case to present our Prayers to God for Spiritual Blessings

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for our selves, and for the Church of Christ, which will assuredly come accompanied with Temporal ones too, if it be for us, and if God sees that it is better for his Church to be prosperous, than to be afflicted in this world; and then it is better so to be, when Men are sufficiently prepared for it, by God's Correction, and their own Repentance. Men ought therefore *always to pray, and not to faint*; for their Prayers thus qualified, will not fail of obtaining what they ask; which our Saviour thought good to illustrate by an Example in the Parable delivered before the Text, *viz. of an unjust Judge, that neither feared God, nor regarded man*; who nevertheless upon the importunity of a Widow, did what was right in her case; much more shall God hear the Prayers of his faithful Servants: For,

1. He is the Just God, and is of himself ready to right those that do at any time suffer wrong.

2. He is also the Merciful God that regardeth Men; and when we desire things of him that are needful, he is of himself ready to grant what we ask, or at least, that which is more needful than what we ask.

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3. Whereas the Judge in the Parable seem'd to contemn the Poverty and Meanness of that Person, that sued to him for Justice ; for which reason she is represented here to be a *Widow*, one of a destitute Condition, that wanted a Patron to assert her Right ; God, who is Just and Good to all, is particularly Gracious to his Servants, and esteems them highly, and no Circumstances of Meanness and Distress, which he suffers them to fall into, can alter his Favour towards them ; for all which Reasons, if the Judge in the Parable granted the Widow's Suit, merely because she lay upon him, and was troublesome to him, much more will God, to whom we are never troublesome, when we make our Requests known to him, grant what we ask, because he is Righteous and Gracious, and loveth and *pitieth us, as a Father doth his Children.*

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The Fourteenth Sermon.

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ASSIZE-SERMON,

PREACHED at

*St. Maries in Bury, 1678.*

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Levit. XIX. 12.

*Ye shall not swear by my Name falsely.*

**T**HE Religious Use of an Oath, depends chiefly upon the Matter, and the Discharge. The Matter must be worthy of that Obligation which an Oath implies; in promising, it must not be unlawful; that we may Swear in *Righteousness*, it must not be impossible, it must not be trivial; and in affirming

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it must be some Fact proveable by our own Testimony, that we may Swear in *Judgment* : All which implies, That we are not to swear indeliberately, passionately, or commonly. The Discharge of an Oath must be answerable to the Obligation, which is to Sincerity of Intention, Fidelity of Performance, and the giving of Testimony exactly according to knowledge; and then we swear in Truth.

All which conditions of using an Oath religiously, are put together by the Prophet *Jeremiah*, c. 4. v. 2. *And thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness.* In righteousness, not profaning an Oath by making it the bond of Iniquity; in Judgment, not exposing it to Contempt, by using it rashly and improperly; and in Truth, not violating the bond of an Oath, by breaking Promise, or giving Testimony to a Falshood.

Swearing in Truth, is that part of the Religion of an Oath, which I shall at this time press upon you, omitting the Consideration of what things an Oath may be conversant about; and that the rather, because I shall apply what I have to say upon the former point, either to such Oaths as fasten any Duty upon us, required by the Laws; or to Swearing in Courts of Judica-  
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ture, where the end of Swearing, viz. the Judicial deciding of Controversies, does always make the matter enquired into, worthy of so high a Testimony.

Therefore have I chosen these Words of God for my Subject, *Ye shall not swear by my name falsely*: A Law which, if any, is written upon the very hearts of Men; and yet it pleased God, that it should be written in our Bibles too: I would to God there were no occasion given by the present age, to urge it in our Sermons, at least in the way of Complaint and Reproof. But since Perjury, Perjury I say, that monstrous sin, which strikes even at the Majesty of God, and betrays the Throne of the King; which undermines the very Foundations of Religion and Justice which does most sensibly grieve the hearts of all good Christians, and threatens the safety of every good Subject; which does not only work mischief to the Innocent, but also damns the Guilty, almost without remedy. If Perjury as 'tis commonly said, be grown the crying Sin of our Land, and it appears that the Penalties of the Law are not terrible enough to prevail against it; we are then bound in Allegiance to God, in Loyalty to the King, in Love to our Country, in Charity to the Souls of Men,



Men, to bring in all the assistance we can from Religion, to expel this Fatal Mischief, and to remove this foul scandal from among us, by instructing plainly, by reproving impartially, by exhorting and perswading most vehemently. In contribution to which good end, I beg your Patience while I endeavour to shew,

First of all, Wherein lies the peculiar Obligation of an Oath.

Secondly, What are the several ways of Violating this Obligation, or incurring the Crime of Perjury.

Thirdly, What are the usual Temptations and Inducements thereunto.

Lastly, Some of the Fearful Aggravations that belong to the sin.

That an Oath induces the utmost obligation to speak the Truth, is confessed by general Practice, which has made, or rather received it to be the end of Controversie: For if a Man could be obliged yet more deeply than by swearing, surely the final resort would not be had to an Oath; if any thing could confirm a Testimony more assuredly, which is in our Power, this should not be the last Confirmation: Therefore let it be considered,  
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that the very end of an Oath implies a peculiar obligation to discharge it truly ; for the greater that trust is, which I cause another to repose in me, the greater treachery I am guilty of, if I then deceive him. But if the end of an Oath obliges Men not to swear falsely, much more does the nature of it. With very good reason may an Oath be rested in as the highest security that Men can offer for their Honesty and Truth : For the nature of an Oath consists in this, That it is an appeal to God as to the Witness of Truth, and the Avenger of Falshood, for the confirmation of our own Testimony.

1. God is appealed to as a *Witness* ; he who is the God of Truth and Knowledge, the faithful and infallible Witness of every thought and action ; he whose Testimony alone, needs not to be confirmed by any other, since for him only it is naturally and eternally impossible to deceive or to be deceived : I ought never to lye or dissemble, or break my Word, because I know my self always to be in the presence of God : This ought to restrain me from being guilty of falshood at any time, that I am within the sight and hearing of the God of Truth : But most of all am I bound to  
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be sincere, when I have appealed to him as present, for the confirmation of what I say. It is a grief to a good Man to hear a lye told to his face; but if the lyar should call him to witness his falshood, this he would take in foul scorn, and with greatest indignation: And what an height of impudence must it needs be, to put the like affront upon God himself, by appealing to his knowledge for our unrighteousness, in matter wherein we deal falsely? What is this, but to impute our own baseness and falshood, to his most Holy Majesty; and to do what is in us, to make him a liar like unto our selves?

2. God is not only called upon as the Witness of Truth when we swear, but also as the avenger of Falshood: And indeed 'tis the adding of this which makes an Appeal to God's Testimony by Invocation, a most forcible Obligation to Truth, and the utmost Security which we can offer for the same. When we pretend that there is a Man present who knows that to be true which we affirm, it would be superfluous to wish that he were revenged of us, if it be not true, because he may be called forth openly to attest the Truth, or discover the Falshood of what we say. Where the Witness is visible, and the Testimony

Testimony credible, it is sufficient to appeal to his knowledge only. But when God is taken to witness by us, there is no voice or sensible appearance, by which he does either confirm or disown the matter. What is it then which makes an appeal to God, the silent and invisible Witness, to be of greater force to oblige our selves, and confirm others, that we speak the Truth? What is it but this, that we do appeal to his Justice, as well as his Knowledge, and call the Vengeance of the Almighty down upon our heads, if he discerns any Falseness and deceit in our Testimony? And 'tis impossible that any obligation to speak the truth, or to discharge a trust, should be greater than this, that if we are now guilty of lying or unfaithfulness, we do not only consent, but desire that the Indignation and Curse of God may fall upon us. I do not think that the invoking of Divine Vengeance, if we swerve from the Truth, is only consequent upon Swearing, according to the Opinion of some Learned Men, but also that it belongs to the very Essence of an Oath; for that should seem to be essential to it, which if it were removed, the fear of Perjury would be taken away with it: But no Man doubts that appealing to God as a Judge, is implied in appealing

pealing to him as a Witness : Hence it is, that the *Septuagint* sometimes useth ἀεὶ, a Curse, for ὅρκος an Oath. Said *Abraham* to his Servant, *Gen. 24. 41. Thou shalt be free from this my Oath* : But the *Septuagint* render it, ἀθῶος εἶμι διὰ τὸ ἄεὶ με, thou shalt be free from this my Curse. And this is that meaning of an Oath, which is well exprest both by the Forms and Rites of Swearing used amongst us, the common Form being this, *So help ye God* ; to which the Party Sworn, gives his Assent by laying his Hand upon the Holy Gospel, and kissing it ; all which is as much as if he had said, If I falsify, let me have no part in the Grace and Mercy of God, and in the Blood of Christ ; may I be accursed in this World, and let my name be blotted out of the Book of Life. And is there not good reason then, why an Oath should be, as the *Apostle* speaks of it, the end of Controversie, since of all other Obligations to Truth, this plainly is the strongest ; and if a Man's Conscience will not be held by this, it will be held by nothing.

Thus much concerning the Sacred Obligation of an Oath. I proceed to shew how many ways it may be violated, and the Guilt of Perjury incurr'd. It is usual-  
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ly said, That an Oath is either Promissory, or Assertory; but I think, that in strictness, every Oath includes a Promise, even the Assertory Oath, by which a Man binds himself to declare what he knows concerning some matter of Fact, past or present; for this Oath includes a Promise of declaring the Truth concerning it, only the Promise and Performance are so close to each other, that they can hardly be distinguish'd; whereas the Obligation of those Oaths we call Promissory, continues for some considerable time to come. These Oaths are mostly taken out of Courts of Judicature, such as the Oaths of subordinate Magistrates, to execute the Laws honestly, and to administer Justice impartially; of the Members of a Society or Corporation, to observe the Rules, and vindicate the Rights of the same; of inferiour Officers, such as Church wardens and Constables, to present Offenders, and execute their Offices according to Law; finally, of Subjects, to yield true Allegiance, and faithful Subjection to the King. Such Oaths as these, are directly violated two ways. First, If there be not an honest Intention at the time of Swearing. 2. If there be not a faithful Performance afterwards: For a Promise has a double aspect, both up-

upon the present Intention, and the future Performance; he that makes a Promise, which at the same time he intends not to perform, is guilty of lying; and though he intends at first, yet if he willingly neglects the Performance afterwards, he hath broken his Word; therefore if the Promise was made under Oath, he is forsworn in either case; and if he was false in both, he is guilty of a double act of Perjury; nay, though the Oath were but one, yet his Perjuries may be many; for so long as those Circumstances remain, in which the Oath binds him, every wilful omission of performing the tenour of his Promise, is contrary to his Oath, and consequently a new violation of it; so often as he fails, so often he is forsworn, as truly so often, as if he had every time before each guilty Failure, taken the same Oath which he bound himself withal at first. Thou mayest be sworn once for all the Year, or for all thy Life; but there is no such matter as being forsworn once for all, as vain People talk; for by disobeying thy Superior, suppose thou hast done contrary to thy Oath yesterday, that was one Perjury; and shouldst thou do the like to morrow, that would be another. If thou art under a Promise confirmed by Oath, but not under

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der the restraint of the Fear of God, thou mayest bind one Curse fast upon thy Head with another, and seal them with a third, and go on to treasure up Wrath against the Day of Wrath.

In Courts of Judicature, Perjury is incurr'd, when false Witness is given in upon Oath, *i. e.* either when a Man swears that to be true, which he knows to be false; or that he is certain of a matter, whereof he is uncertain; or that he declares the utmost of his knowledge concerning a Fact, when yet he conceals any part thereof. In this last case, the Witness is forsworn as plainly as in the two former; for his Oath is to give in Evidence, not only the Truth, and nothing but the Truth; but likewise the whole Truth, to answer such Questions as the Court shall put to him; therefore the Witness is not clear from Perjury, merely by saying nothing but what is true, touching the matter in question, if in favour to either side he conceals so much as any one Circumstance in his Answers and Depositions, which he knows would alter the Case: What can be plainer? He that swears to declare the whole Truth, is forsworn if he does it not; and he surely does it not, who declares it in part only. Moreover, a Witness may incur the guilt



of Perjury, by endeavouring to blind the Evidence with deceitful shuffling Answers, instead of declaring what he knows, in plainness and simplicity of speaking; for tho' the Court by multiplying Questions, may screw out the Truth at last, yet he has not discharg'd his Oath, which obliged him not only to an actual and final discovery of the Truth, but to an honest intention of so doing; and 'tis very plain, that he intends not the Truth should be discovered, who darkens and hides it as much as he can. Much less can his Oath be discharged by the help of Equivocation, and Mental Reservations, which being of no force to save a Lye, are much less able to excuse from Perjury.

The Oath of the Jury being a Promissory Oath, to bring in a Verdict according to Evidence, their Oath may be doubly violated, as was now observed, by not intending so to do, and by not doing of it. If any one of the Jury be prepossess'd in favour of one side, intending, be the Evidence what it will, to use all his Interest with the rest, in favour of that; that man, I say, is perjur'd as soon as ever he is sworn; he has sworn falsely, tho' perhaps he be over-ruled, and an honest Verdict be brought in at last. Again, if any of them

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intend honestly at first, but are afterward wrought to conspire in a Verdict contrary to the Evidence, they have violated their Oath at last. Nay, a corrupt Jury is guilty of Perjury in another respect, since they swear against that very temptation which misleads them; they are to bring in a Verdict according to the proof of the Fact; whereas they make it according as they are inclined to the Parties; and yet they are sworn, not to swerve from the Truth, for Fear, Hatred, Favour, or Affection.

But farther; one Man may be guilty of the violation of another Man's Oath; he that suborns a false Witness, is before God, guilty of his Perjury; yea, if he does so much as tempt a Witness to be false; for tho' he himself is not actually sworn, yet he designs that an Oath should be broken. God hath said, *Thou shalt swear in truth*; he in effect says, Thou shalt not do so; and therefore if he prevails, he is at once guilty of the false Witness, his breaking that Law of God, and likewise of his own contradicting it, which is every whit as bad; and there is this Circumstance rendring the Perjury more displeasing to God, That two Men are guilty of violating one Oath.

The Case is the same in tampering with Juries, to possess them beforehand with favour or disaffection to either of the Parties ; For what is this, but to persuade them to Perjury ? that is, to give their Verdict with respect to Persons, and not with regard to the Evidence.

And I do not see, but they who are to Impannel Juries, are likewise guilty of the Violation of other Mens Oaths, if in any Case depending, they return Jurors whose Interest and Affection they believe will carry them to favour the side befriended by their own wishes ; for tho' they may chuse whether they will be forsworn, yet he that returns 'em had a Mind that they should, rather than the Cause should miscarry on that side to which he is partial himself.

Lastly, Whoever in behalf of a Client, puts words into the mouth of a slow Country Witness, while he is giving his Testimony, by which the Witness means one thing, and he another, by this means perverting the Evidence, while the poor Man perceives it not ; he does not only directly offend against the end of swearing, which is the discovery of the Truth, but before God he is as guilty of the Violation of an Oath, as the honest Witness would

would have been, had he knowingly used the same subtilty in giving Testimony, which was indeed but practised upon him.

And thus much concerning the usual ways, direct or indirect, by which an Oath may be violated; it being requisite to touch upon them at least; that what remains to be said, may find us prepared for particular Application.

As to the Inducements to Perjury, which was the Third Subject propounded, there is no doubt but every sin which preys upon the Conscience, does form the mind more or less into some disposition to this, the blackest of them all; every thing inclines to it, which lessens the Sense of Religion, and the Fear of offending God: The prevalency of any lust, especially of Ambition and Revengetfulness, animates Men to break loose from all the most sacred bonds that should restrain them from gratifying their inordinate appetites. Again, Partiality grounded upon Prejudice and Interest, upon Envy and Covetousness, has been the cause of many Perjuries; in most questions concerning Rents and Tythes, every body is ready to say how the Case is like to go.

But when all is said, there is nothing in this our Age has made such foul work in swearing, as Faction has done; that com-

bination of Covetousness, Pride, and Ambition, of Envy, Hatred, and Malice, united and made fast together, under Hypocrisy. Any one of these singly by it self, leads to Perjury; but when they all conspire they drive on to it, without opposition.

Another inlet to the violation of Oaths, is the Practice of Common Swearing; he that will call God to witness Trifles, by degrees loseth the Reverence of an Oath, and is within a little of calling him to witness falshood, I mean upon Solemn Oath; for 'tis not to be doubted, that the Customary Oaths of Conversation, make the Swearer guilty of frequent Perjuries, when he thinks not of it; but if he swears in truth, before a Court of Judicature, against his Interest or Affection, we are to thank his Generosity for it, and not the respect he has for an Oath. Otherwise, he that Swears commonly and rashly, will upon any considerable Temptation Swear falsely with deliberation.

In a word, such are the Inducements and Occasions of Perjury that perhaps it were to be wished that the manner of administering Oaths, were in all places a little more awful, and solemn than it is, to strike into those Men some reverence of an Oath, and fear of Perjury, who bring nothing of it along

along with them. Indeed, the most effectual way to prevent false Swearing, would be to consider the heinous Aggravations of the Sin, some of which in the last place I shall now represent.

We know that sincerity in speaking of the Truth; and keeping ones Promise, is every Man's Duty, whether he be Sworn or not. The natural Obligation we lye under to be true and faithful to our Word, is so strong and so sensible, that every Man is ashamed to be found in a lye. But whoever is known to be a common falsifier of his Word, and so given to Deceit that he is not to be trusted, let him be endued with never so many considerable and useful Parts besides, that shall be sure to ruin his Reputation. Insincerity is so foul a Stain, that no good quality can wipe it out; and this shews that there is a strong Obligation to trust, common to all Mankind; wherefore this must needs be one heinous Circumstance of Perjury, That when the sacred Bond of an Oath, is once violated, the perjurd Person is guilty of breaking that Faith and Truth, which was a natural Duty before.

But sincerity is still more a Duty, when my Testimony is required in order to publick Peace and Justice. All Men have

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right to be truly dealt with, much more the Magistrate, by whom I am protected most of all, when he requires it in order to the doing of Justice, or the securing of Government. It is then my duty to the Magistrate, 'tis my Duty to my Neighbour, 'tis my Duty to my Country, to speak the Truth clearly and honestly, and if I promise any thing to discharge it faithfully. The discharge of thy Office which thou art Sworn to execute, is both requisite for the publick Good, and requir'd by just Authority; if thou hadst not so much as promised it, thou hadst been still obliged to the same, in obedience to thy Superior, in Love to thy Country. If thou hadst been barely required to give thy Testimony in Court, yet even without Oath or Promise, thou wert greatly bound to Truth; because the telling of a lye in this Case, were impudent undutifulness to the Judge, and manifestly injurious to thy Neighbour. In like manner, a Verdict should be according to the Evidence, if it were only for this that a Controversy might be righteously decided, instead of establishing some instance of Iniquity by a Law. This therefore is a farther Aggravation of the Sin of Perjury in all these Cases, That the Oath which is violated,

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did not only bind to that sincerity, which is the Duty of all Men every where; but to that Truth, which was particularly demanded by the Magistrate, which was to be an instrument of Justice and publick Security, which was necessary for the preventing of Wars, and the doing of Right.

But these are light Aggravations in Comparison to those that arise from the nature and particular Obligation of an Oath it self. At least, they will receive great weight from these, as you shall see presently.

'Tis an excess of impious boldness to worship God with a lye at the Tongues end; but Swearing is an act of Worship. *Thou shalt Worship the Lord thy God, and swear by his name.* Swearing is a direct acknowledgment of the Divine Attributes; and to Swear falsely, must needs be as bad as making long Prayers to devour Widows houses. But he that Swears, does not barely worship God, he takes him to witness in his behalf too, so the forsworn Man calls him to attest a Lye. To imagine the wickedness of this, what would you think of a Man, who should appeal to some worthy Person, for the truth of a matter, which he



he is sure the Gentleman knows to be a lye? Farther, what if he should dare to appeal to the Judge himself, or to the whole Court of Judicature, tho he knew that every one there would utterly deny it; however, that they would not confess it without being Liars like unto himself? But this is a shameless insolence, that no Man ever ventured upon. What think you then of him that Appeals to God's Testimony for the credit of a Lye? To the Testimony of God, I say, who is infinitely greater, and to be had in more Reverence, than the most venerable Assemblies of Men. When we are guilty of other Sins, we sneak away from the thoughts of God. The Drunkard, and the Adulterer, and the Thief, are ashamed and afraid to think there is so great a Witness of their Crimes; and in Comparison to the false Swearer, they retire with some sort of Modesty from his Presence, hiding him from themselves at least, tho they cannot hide themselves from him. 'Tis only the forsworn Wretch, that must of necessity Sin without any shamefacedness; that tells a Lye to the very Face of God, and desires him to observe it, and be the witness of his own dishonour.

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And yet a more desperate degree of Wickedness is implied in Perjury than this, and that because an Oath is an Appeal to God's Justice. For the Swearer by consenting to fall under the Rigour of Justice, unless he deals uprightly, as far as in him lies, he calls himself off by Perjury from any appeal to Mercy afterward. By other Sins we make an ill use of the Mercy of God; but by this, we set it at defiance. The perjur'd Man deprives himself, as much as he can, of the last hope of Sinners, who though they put many affronts upon the rest of God's Attributes, yet study to keep a reserve in his Goodness and Compassion; but he throws himself, according to his own Will and Consent, into the hands of Divine Justice, and its utmost Severity.

Yet farther, through all these Obstacles does the false Swearer make his way, that he may come to pervert Justice and Equity. A Man should be horribly afraid at the thought of so much impiety, if his end were to help the Fatherless and Widow, and to save the Poor from wrong, or to secure his Country out of danger; but how much more, when he hunts for the precious Life, when he betrays the Simple and protects the Crafty, or serves the designs of Faction  
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or Oppression? For I should guess that Forswearing is never practic'd, but upon the Wrong side, at least, that 'tis called in very rarely, in comparison, to assist the Right. 'Tis the unjust Man that seeks to defend himself by artificial delays, by indirect Proceedings, and at a dead lift by downright Perjuries; while the Righteous trusts to the Honesty of his Cause, and the Wisdom of the Judge, and the Providence of God. But if I should be mistaken in this, if Forswearing should be more ordinary than I imagine, even on the Right side; surely it must be, because 'tis so common on the Wrong, that nothing is believed to be safe without it. Behold then, what horrible confusion it makes in the World; while it confounds Right and Wrong, Truth and Falshood, Justice and Injustice, blotting out the clearest Characters, by which they can be distinguisht from one another in Courts of Judgment. 'Tis this, which levels an Honest Cause with the Unjust one that is advanced against it; nay, which creates Confidence of Success in the Oppressor, and fills the good Man, who dares not be damn'd, with Mistrust and Fear. It is this, which makes the fortune of Verdicts as uncertain, as that of Arms; and gives

gives Courage to the Villain to Law with the Innocent ; it robs Vertue of much of its Defence and Security in this World , and puts Power into the hands of the Malicious, and affords Protection to the Murderer , and the Traytor. The detestable Effects thereof in the present Life, cannot be described, but by the Cries of the Oppressed, the Sighs of Orphans, the Tears of Widows, the Ruin of Families, and the Shedding of innocent Blood. And tho' every Man that dares be forsworn, has not arriv'd thus far in doing mischief, yet he only wanteth a gainful Opportunity, or an unlucky Provocation, and then a Devil to put it into his head.

To conclude, What should I say farther, to enkindle your Zeal against a Sin already swell'd into so vast a bigness, but this, That so far as it prevails, it is always likely to intercept between us, and the most happy Influence of the Honourable Judges, when they come to us full of the invaluable Blessings of Government ; they in whom good Subjects, and wronged Innocents expect to meet with powerful Patrons, while none but the Criminal and Seditious shrinks away with Shame and Fear ; who to the State bring along with them

them Peace, by deciding our Controversies ; and Plenty, and Honour, and Safety, by enforcing Obedience to the Laws : Who to the Church bring the Securities of her Patrimony and Rights, making the Benefits of their Justice to bear good proportion with the Authority of their Commission, which they have received not only from the King, but by him from God, who are the faithful Dispensers of the Justice of the King, and the most welcome Messengers of his Love and Care for the People : Who from the Sovereign convey Life and Spirit, through the whole Body of the Nation, returning the same in grateful Loyalty and Duty from his Subjects, and in their Blessings and Prayers for the Establishment of the Throne. Should we not all conspire to remove every hindrance of such Advantages as these, which being rightly considered, seem to be no less desirable, necessary and universal, than the refreshing Showers, and the return of fruitful Seasons. But than Perjury, nothing does more fatally intercept the Communication of those excellent Benefits ; than Perjury, I say, which can obstruct Justice in its very Course, and baffle the most solemn Preparation for it, even when the Judge is present,

present, when the Court is set, when the Matter is opened, when all Things are ready for Impartial Proceedings, when the Injur'd is arrived to the height of his Hopes, and the Evil Doer is almost fallen into the Hands of Justice. To sum up all: The Man who dares be Forsworn, is one whom neither a natural Sense of Good and Evil, nor Duty to the Magistrate, nor Love to his Country, nor Justice to his Neighbour, nor Compassion to the Miserable, nor the Presence of the Judge, nor the Presence of God, nor an Appeal to his Knowledge, nor an Appeal to his Justice, and the fear of damning himself by his own Sentence, can retain from Lying, and breach of his Word.

We can hardly think that such a Wretch as this, is fit to live upon the face of the Earth. But shall he then ever ascend into God's holy Hill? Shall he ever come into the Portion of the Righteous? How tender are thy Mercies, O God, who art yet willing to accept even of his Repentance; who hast yet suspended the most deserved Execution of his own Sentence against himself, and left him under some possibility of Forgiveness. In conformity to which great Example we pray, That  
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he may be snatcht as a Brand out of the Fire, and through a great Repentance, escape the Damnation of Hell.

*Now to the most Gracious and Sacred Majesty of the Infinite Good G O D, be ascribed all Honour and Blessing for evermore.*

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The Fifteenth Sermon.

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A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

WINDSOR,

Before the

Princes of *DENMARK*.

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GEN. V. xxiv.

*And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.*

**I**N these Words there are two Things expressed:

1. The Character of *Enoch*, that he walked with God.

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2. The manner of his End in this World, that he *was not*, for *God took him*. Both which Points I intend to consider, and then to shew how we may make such Considerations profitable to our selves.

1. Concerning his Character; we may observe, That it was given to none of his Predecessors; from which we must not conclude, that none of them were good Men, but only that he excelled the rest. In so very short an Account of the Patriarchs before the Flood, as we have in this History, wherein little more is reported of them, but their Names, and their Age, to have it said of one of them, that he *walked with God*; and that of one is a reasonable intimation, that he excelled in Godliness and Vertue; And this appears farther, in that God *translated him*, which of it self implies, that he had arrived to great perfection. But to *walk with God*, is the Character of all Persons, that are truly Holy and Good, though it agrees more eminently to some than to others; as it did to *Enoch*, more than to all his Predecessors. As for the expression, it is figurative, but yet very plain; for

for *Walking* doth in this place, as in many more, signifie the general Course and Tenour of a Man's Life ; and therefore *walking with God*, is a lively expression of his doing those things, which are well pleasing to God ; as if in every step of his passage through this World, he had God so present with him, as to see him with his Bodily Eyes : which meaning may be more distinctly explained by these two Particulars.

1. That Piety, or Faith in God, is the over-ruling Principle of his Actions.

2. That because he is Governed by such a Principle, he lives in the constant Practice of all other Vertue and Duty.

1. That Piety, or Faith in God, is the over-ruling Principle of his Actions ; a Reason that prevails with him, above all other Reasons and Motives whatsoever : He is therefore said to *walk with God*, because it is a sense of God that runs through his Conversation, and takes place against all other Considerations ; and leaves a mark of it self upon all his Behaviour : A sense of God, I say, that is,

of God's Infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, of the Absolute Right which he hath to be obeyed by his Creatures, and of their absolute dependance upon him; A sense of his Presence *every-where, beholding the evil and the good*: A sense of his Justice, that will not suffer the wicked to go unpunished; and of his Faithfulness, that will not suffer the Righteous to be unrewarded: It is this sense of God, that Governeth his Conversation, that restrains him, that puts him forward, that sets bounds to his desire, and to his use of pleasures; that prescribes to him how to get, and how to use his Wealth; that hath to do in all his Affairs, and admits no Reason from Flesh and Blood, or from Worldly Interest, to be heard, but in subordination to it self: And surely he that is thus affected, that Believes in God, that stands in Awe of him, that Loves him, and puts his Trust in him, may well be said to *walk with God*, since he doth so steddily walk in his ways, as if God took him by the Hand, and led him through every doubtful passage of his Life; for it is, in effect, the same thing, that he having God still *before his Eyes*, or rather a lively sense of him

him in his heart, and knowing what his will and pleasure is, regards nothing in comparison, but the doing of that which will please him; and whatever reasons of action do, as he goes thorough the World, mix themselves with this; this is still the supreme and prevailing Reason, by which all others are either allowed or rejected. This, I say, That what God will be pleased with, must be done; and what will displease him must be let alone. And this is that Faith by which the just have lived in all Ages, That Faith therefore, which the *11th.* to the *Hebrews* so highly extols; Those Worthies recorded there, believed *that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

2. To this we must add, That because he that is said to *walk with God*, lives by Faith, therefore he lives also in the Practice of all other Vertue and Duty: For Faith leads a Man to all, which no other Principle that we know of will do, though other Principles there are of good use too. To *walk with God*, is something more than to cherish, and keep alive the good inclinations that came into the World with us; for it is to correct and

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amend the bad ones : some Men are by Nature framed to many Virtues, as I believe all are to some or other ; but no Man is naturally disposed to all ; and most certainly every one hath a share of corrupted nature ; but he that walks with God, is ruled by a Principle, that doeth not only improve what is good in his Nature, but mends what is bad in it.

It is also a great deal more, than to observe Humane Laws, since the Laws of Men can do no more, than restrain People from being intolerably bad, and such as Humane Society cannot bear. He that believes in God, submits to just Authority for Conscience sake ; but the Case hath often happened, when for the same Conscience sake, such a one hath done his Duty, by refusing to do what the Law of Man required ; which is a plain argument, that Humane Authority is not the Rule of Perfection ; and that we must Live by an higher Principle, than that of Obedience to Man, if we live in all respects, as we ought to do.

It is something more, than to govern our intentions and actions by doing well for our selves in this World ? For although integrity

integrity and well-doing in all kinds of duty is generally the best way to prosperity in this Life; yet sometimes the contrary happens, and more is to be got by Flattery and Falshood, than by Honesty and Sincerity; nay it is the inordinate desire of the Prosperity of this World, that still makes Men do base and wicked things; and therefore the regard of our ease and advantage here, cannot be the true Principle of Virtue. And if we should bring every other reason of doing what we ought to do, to the Tryal, every other reason besides that of Faith, will be found very defective and insufficient, and such as will lead a Man to evil as well as to good, as it happens. But a sense of God, with the belief of all his Perfections, and all his Promises and Threatnings, makes a Man every way, and in every respect, what he ought to be, because it shews him all his Duty, and obliges him to all his Duty; and while he is under the Power of his Faith, he is steady in the right way, not to be moved out of it by any Temptation; but whether it be opportunity invites, or danger threatens, what Temptation soever sets upon him, he will say

with Joseph, *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Setting aside Faith, it may bear dispute, whether it be adviseable or no, in such or such a case, to do what becomes a righteous and Virtuous Man; but let a Man live by Faith in God, and there can be no dispute about it. *Rejoyce O young man in thy youth, and walk in the sight of thine eyes, and the imagination of thy Heart; that is, were there nothing else to be considered but Pleasure, nothing but Wealth and Greatness, but the Splendor of this World, and the gratifying of a lust, this liberty might possibly be made to appear not so very unreasonable. But know, that for all these things God will bring thee to Judgment.* That to be sure turns the case, and answers every objection against our Duty, and every argument for any Sin; and therefore he that walks with God, doth all his Duty otherwise, is good in all kinds, and in every place where his business lies, or where his Temptations lie; For *God is in all his thoughts*, in all his affairs, in all his company, and in his retirement from Company; God's word is with him, that word of God which shews him his Duty.

ty upon all occasions, and which shows him the rewards of doing what is commanded, and the Punishments of Disobedience; and the sence of his Presence is with him, that sence which fills him with Life and Joy in well-doing, especially where the Temptation to Sin is very great, and which would dismay him, and make him a burden to himself, if he should act contrary to his clear and settled Judgment of what he ought to do. In short, to *walk with God*, is to be universally good and righteous, which no Man can be, but he who lives by Faith; Hence it is, that we find God himself encouraging the *Father of the Faithful* to go on in his way of Piety and Virtue as hitherto he had done; *Walk before me and be thou perfect*, chap. 17. v. 1. That is, Be thou still Ruled by my word, still believe my Promises, and Trust my Providence, and in all that thou doest, be mindful of this, that I am with thee, and then shalt thou be perfect. An example to all Generations of Virtue as well as of Piety, and of all good works, no less than of a firm Faith: Hence it is, that the wise Man tells us, that *by the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil*, Prov. 16. 6. and that the  
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*fear of the Lord is a fountain of life to depart from the snares of Death, Prov. 14.27. And St. John, This is the victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith. 1 John 5. 4.*

I have thus shewn, what is meant by the Character of *Enoch*, when it is said that he *walked with God*, viz. That his regard to God was the over-ruling Principle of all his actions, and that because he was Governed by Faith, he lived also in the constant Practice of his Duty in all relations whatsoever; this being the only Principle that makes a Man in every respect, what he ought to be. I proceed,

2. To say something concerning the end he made in this World: *He was not, for God took him*; which place is thus explained by the Author to the *Hebrews*, chap. 11. v. 5. That *Enoch was translated*; that he *should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him* (i. e.) he died not, but was Translated alive into Heaven; and it was a strange surprise to the Age in which he lived; who by his sudden removal from them, and their hearing no more of him, were convinced that it was God who had taken him to a better

better Life. Now that which we are in this place to consider, is the instruction so Singular an act of Providence afforded to the World; and there are these Two ends to which it manifestly served, viz. That that Age might be awakned into the consideration of another Life, by so surprising a Testimony thereof, as this was; and withall, that they might by so sensible an Argument be led to consider, that the true reward of Piety and integrity, was not in this World, but in a better.

1. There was this instruction in the Translation of *Enoch*, which the World could not but take notice of, That there was undoubtedly another life after this, to which he was taken, Soul and Body, having left no part of himself behind him here, as other Mortals did. And by this time, such an instruction was grown very needful; For the World, tho it was yet in its Youth and Vigour; was grown old enough for Men to forget their Creator, and to abandon themselves for the most part to a Voluptuous and Dissolute Life: And that this is no uncertain Conjecture, appears from hence; that *Enoch* was Translated but Sixty Nine Years before *Noah* was Born,

Born, in whose time Mankind was grown to such an intollerable degree of Licentiousness, That God sent the Flood to sweep all away but eight Persons. Now it is not to be thought, that the World was overspread with such Monstrous Vices all of a sudden, but that after the manner of all Humane Degeneracy, Corruption of manners, and of Principles too, came on by degrees, and consequently that in *Enoch's* time, who was Translated little less than a Thousand Years after the Creation, there was a very great decay of Piety and Virtue every where; that Men were generally bewitched with the Pleasures of the beautiful and charming Place, which the Earth was before the Flood, and forgot their Creator, and had lost the Sense of that infinitely better World which *Adam* and the Religious Patriarchs had by revelation from God given them assurance of: In such an Age as this, when for the reason now mentioned, it is evident, that the generality of Mankind were sunk into Debauchery, and perhaps into Infidelity too; *Enoch* was a steady Pattern of Piety and Virtue; and whilest most Men walked after their own Lusts, and the best

best were much to blame, he walked with God, and Lived above the pleasures and enjoyments of this Life, having God before his Eyes, and another Life, and a better Life in his hopes. It is therefore very reasonable to conceive, that God intended by this surprizing Testimony of Translating *Enoch* alive into a better World, to convince the unbelieving, to awaken the inconsiderate, and to call off that Voluptuous Age from these brutish debaucheries, to mind better things, and to prepare for a better Life; especially since in the second place,

2. This was a very instructing admonition, That God who *is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, as the Epistle to the *Hebrews* says upon this very example of *Enoch*; that God, I say, rewarded his Piety, not with giving him a longer Life in that pleasant World, but in another, which was therefore a place more happy and desirable than the Earth was, even in that delicious state and condition of it, before the Flood had made as strange an alteration in that, as it made in the Age of Man's Life: That God, I say, should take him alive out of this World, when it abounded with all manner of delights

lights and Pleasures ; and this at the Age of 365 Years, when he was but a young Man, as the World was then, younger in proportion, than we are now at 30 ; when he was in full Vigour and Capacity for all the Entertainments of Sense, which the Earth afforded, even to Luxury, and this according to the course of Nature to last for some Hundreds of Years to come ; That God should translate him under these Circumstances to another Life, after he had served him with a constant Piety in his Younger Years, and lived among Men with an unreprouable Innocence and Vertue ; this, I say, was a demonstration to all that would consider it, That that World to which he was translated, was a better World than that from which he was taken ; and that they might be sure to understand this Instruction, God took him not away by the common means of Mortality ; since if he had died, that Vicious Age would have imputed that change to any thing, rather than to a Divine Providence, rewarding so excellent a Man with so early a removal to a better Life ; and therefore he was taken away alive, that they might not be able to question the Power that

that did it, or to mistake the Reason, why it was done, that they might know *Enoch* had obtained a Reward from God, suitable to that Life that he had lived here, and to that Faith by which he had lived, and in which he had wrought righteousness; being removed from hence to pleasures more pure and ravishing, than all this World can afford. In a word, they might have seen, and for some time it is like they acknowledged it, though they soon fell back again, That the great Business of Mankind here, is to live in all Godliness and Honesty; and that God doth not reward them that do so, with the Pleasures and Glories of this World, but with the Enjoyments of a better.

And now having said thus much concerning the extraordinary Character of *Enoch*, and the singular End it pleased God to make with him in this World, I have yet more to do by way of application; and that,

1. To propound the Example of *Enoch*, and such as he was, who walked with God, to our imitation. And,

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2. To propound, though not the manner, yet the substance of his Reward, for our Encouragement to walk as he walked.

1. To propound his Example, as an Example that is of it self worthy of our imitation, and is withal an imitable Example, an Example that is worthy to be followed, and an Example not too hard to follow; that it is worthy of our imitation, appears both from that Life to which his Faith led him, and from the Nature of that Principle itself by which he lived. As to the Life whereunto it leads, it is made up of *whatsoever things are just, honest, lovely, of good report: if there be any vertue, praise; of Justice, Faithfulness, Temperance, Government of Passions, Wisdom and Fortitude, which are the Glory of Humane Nature, and things acceptable to God, and approved of men.* These things are enough to recommend the Principle from whence they come: And yet (2.) It is in it self the best, whether we consider, (1.) Our concernment in those things which we believe. For if there be a God, what is our

our dependance upon this World, to our dependance upon him? And if we shall endure beyond this Life, and that for ever, what are our Fortunes till we die, to our Eternal state after Death? It is not our mere Nature, but our Relation to God, that makes us considerable; and we are very abject Creatures, if we have nothing to do but Eat and Drink, and to live a sensual Life for a little time, and then to vanish into nothing. Or (2.) Whether we consider Faith as a Persuasion grounded upon Rational Evidence, that is, such Evidence, as requires a free and unprejudiced, and clear Judgment to perceive, but which not bearing upon the Senses of Men, distinguisheth between the Wise and the Honest on one side, and unteachable Persons on the other: A Believer doth of all Men make the most proper use of his Reason, because he assents to the Principles of Religion; For instance: That there is a God; not upon immediate bodily Sight, but upon a means of Conviction suited to a reasonable Nature: Or, (3.) Whether we consider Faith, as a means to secure an happy Enjoyment of our selves in this World, of which I need to say no more; that it is the only true support of Man's Mind, under



der all the Afflictions and Calamities of Life ; and that which can make us easy under them , will make us happy in every condition ; that the Example of these Men , who have lived by Faith , and walked with God , is worthy of our Imitation , is a Subject that might be spoken to without end. But let us consider it,

2. As an imitable Example: For that it is so, the Pattern mentioned in the Text, doth abundantly prove ; *Enoch* lived in a World that was full of Temptation, and those as dangerous as Temptations can possibly be, the Temptations of Luxury which in their kind are inferior to none ; and as to their degree , when *Enoch* lived , they were at the height ; and as I have shown already, he had bad Examples enough, and probably but very few that were good. So that Piety lay under great disadvantage in the common Opinion, and likely enough it was a matter of some reproach to observe Rules : for that Generation of Men was now began, of whom we find in the next Chapter, that *God saw that the wickedness of men was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, were only*

*only evil continually* : They set themselves at no time to do any good ; all their business was to follow their brutish Appetites from one day to another, without restraint ; the World was hastning apace to that Condition, when *Enoch* lived ; and yet he lived so piously , set so good an Example , as if he had never seen any but good ones himself ; and whilst almost all Men were busy to fill themselves with the excess of sensual Pleasures, his only business, in comparison, was to please God ; he looked up every day to his Maker , out of whose hands so lately came that beautiful Fabrick, which was made for Man ; and instead of surfeiting himself with those delightful entertainments of Sense that were round about him, he raised his mind above them to the Contemplation of the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God ; he offered to the Creator of all things, the Sacrifices of Praise and Thankfulness ; he resigned himself wholly to his Will and Pleasure ; he believed his Promise of a better World ; and in that Faith he wrought righteousness. And what can be said , why we , who cannot reasonably count our Temptati-

ons greater than those he was under; why we, I say, should not also live as he did? Why should the Government of our Passions, and the ordering of our Conversation by the Rules of Religion, be harder to us, than it was to him? What should hinder us from adoring and praising our Maker every day, and from offering our Prayers and Supplications to him? Why should not we consider, that God is present with us every where, and sees us in all that we do, that we may always behave our selves, as in his Presence? May we not with as much advantage, as he possibly could have, look beyond this World, and compare it with immortality in a far better state of things than this; and *set our affections upon things above, and not upon things on the earth?* Especially, since we have not here a continuing place; I mean, since we do not expect to live hardly the tenth part of that time upon Earth, which the Patriarchs did before the Flood; but all our days are few and evil, and our Life short and troublesome; and therefore doth of it self admonish us to look after another,

another, and to provide better for our selves hereafter, than we can possibly do here.

Let no Man say, That the baits of Pleasure, and the cares of Life, and the multiplicity of his worldly Affairs; that the evil manners of others, and the snares of Conversation, and his unavoidable Engagements in the World, will not permit that Justice and Purity, that Devotion and Sobriety, which Religion requires; nor that consideration of God and another Life, which is necessary to *keep us unspotted from this present world.* That for this purpose, we must retire out of the World, and live in Cells, or in Houses where there is nothing else to do, but to Watch and Pray; where the cares of Life cannot follow them; where evil Examples, and where Temptations cannot find them out: All this is but unreasonable, and vain pretence: For, I beseech you, what was *Enoch*, and his Profession and Order of Life in the World? Was he shut up from any part of common Conversation, or eased from any part of the common Cares of this Life? No, by no means; he in all respects of Se-

cular Conversation, and civil Relation, was in the very same condition that other Men were, as you will confess, if you look back to *verse 21.* and so on till you come to the Text: *And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methusaleh: and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methusaleh three hundred years and begat Sons and Daughters: and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years; And Enoch walked with God, &c.* By which you may see, that *Enoch*, who had this Testimony, was a married Man, and for that Reason engaged as much in the necessary Affairs of Civil Conversation, as any other; and we do not find, that after he *begat Methusaleh*, his eldest Son, he left his Wife and his Family, and betook himself to any retirement, and was from that time forward, under Vows of single Life; it is expressly said, that *Enoch walked with God, after he begat Methusaleh, three hundred years, and begat Sons and Daughters.* So that all this time, *viz.* for three hundred years, of which it is said, that *he walked with God*, *Enoch* was the Husband of a Wife, the Father of Children, the Master of a numerous

numerous Family ; nay, he was a Prince in his Generation, *the Seventh from Adam*, in the Line of *Seth* ; the eldest Son by descent from the eldest house of *Seth* ; one therefore, who in his time made no little Figure in the World, and was deeply engaged in the Affairs of Government, beyond all others, excepting his Father and Grandfather, and the Patriarchs, that were yet alive. *Enoch* then differed not from other Men, in any respect of Civil Affairs ; he had such Relations, and common Engagements, as other Men had ; and in some respects more, being descended from *Seth* in the Patriarchal Line, which some believe was the Regal Line too, in one Division of Mankind. But tho in these Circumstances he differed not from other Men, otherwise than that his Affairs might be more Cumber-som than those of ordinary Persons ; yet with respect to Religion and Virtue, to Faith in God, and an Holy Life, he differed very much from the generality of Mankind ; for in the midst of all that Business and Conversation, which his place in the World engaged him in ; *he walked with God*,

he was a perfect Man, and grew to that height of Piety and Righteousness, that God thought fit to reward so eminent a Person, with translating him alive from Earth, to Heaven; a plain demonstration against the Pretences of the *Roman Church*, That retirement in *Monasteries*, and a single Life, are not necessary to the highest degree of Piety; that the best part of Religion is not to be coop'd up in a Cloyster, but to be seen in the World, and in the ordinary Conversation of Men; That the most Excellent part of Devotion, that the best, and noblest degrees of Faith and Virtue, may be attained and exercised, and improved in a state of Worldly Relations and Engagements; and that these things therefore ought not to be pretended in our excuse for not *walking with God*, as *Enoch* did. Let me therefore add in the

2. Place. That we have the hope of the same reward to influence us, which *Enoch* had, though not of being translated alive into a better World, yet of going thither by the common passage of death, which as to the substance of the reward is the same thing; the other circumstance

stance, so singular in the case of *Enoch*, being not altogether so much for his own sake, as for the instruction of others. There were but Two Persons that went thus into a better World, *Enoch* one; For the instruction of a declining and degenerate Age, almost wholly sunk into a worldly Life; *Elias* another, for an admonition to a very corrupt Age too; the former when all things were running into licentiousness, and disorder amongst the Patriarchs before the Law; the latter, when the time was as bad under the Law, and both these to maintain a sense of God, and another World; while yet the revelation of a Future Life, was not so clear and publick as it was made by our Lord Jesus Christ, who *brought life and immortality to light*: And since he by his Doctrine, and by his Resurrection, and his Ascension into Heaven, hath given us such evidence and notice of a life to come, that a more clear evidence could not have been reasonably desired, there is no need that the World under the Gospel, should be admonished by such extraordinary methods any more: Our blessed Lord himself was not translated



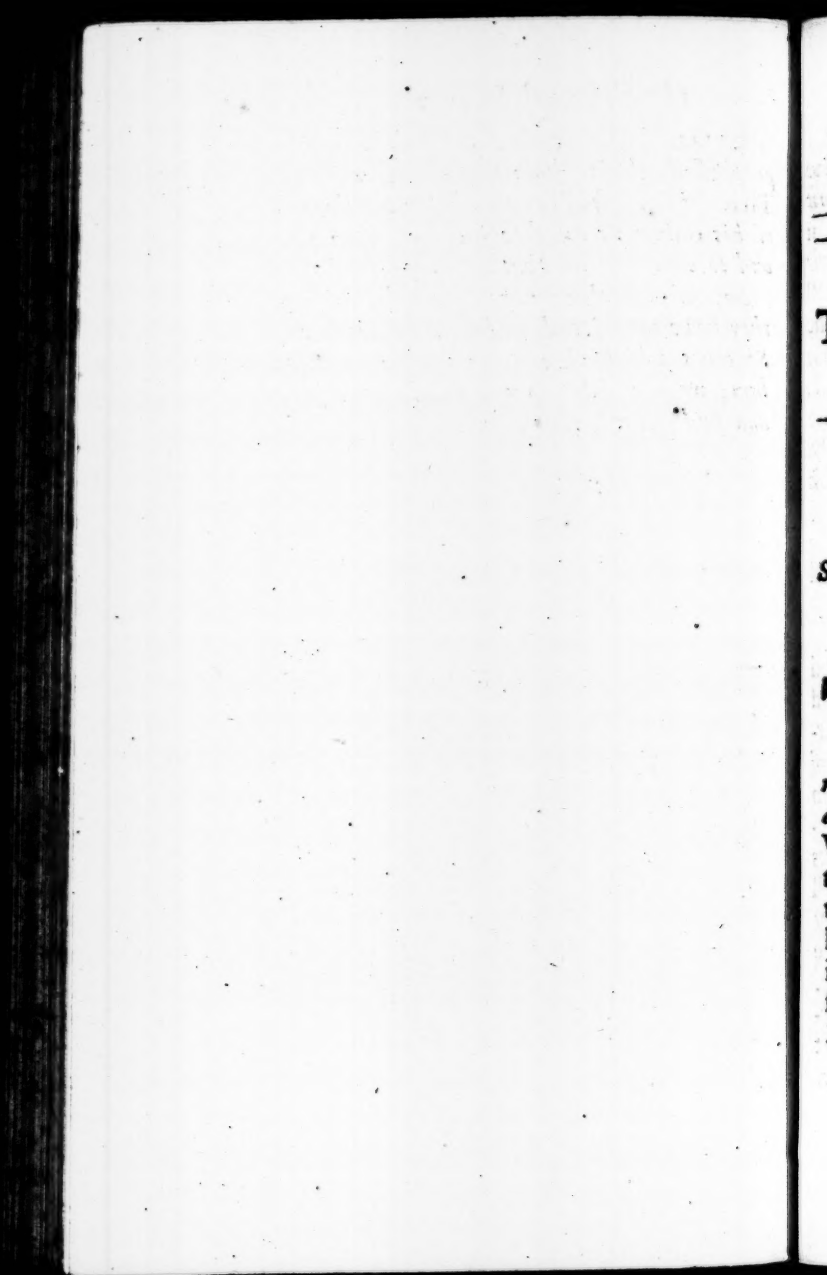
ted into Heaven, till after his death, and Resurrection; he in all things going before us, shewing us by his example, not only what our duty is, but what, and in what manner our reward shall be conferred: we must die, and rise again, and then ascend to *the Heaven of Heavens*, for the consummation of our reward; And having *this hope* Let us *purify our selves, as he is pure; having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

To conclude, We have the same God to serve and obey, that *Enoch* had; the same promises, and those more publicly and solemnly made, and more strongly confirmed to us, than ever they were to the Fathers; we have, I say, the same promises to excite us, that he had; and all the same advantages that he had, and in many respects much greater, through the Revelation of the Gospel by our Lord Jesus; and we are under no greater temptations and discouragements, than he met with; or if we were, the *grace of God is sufficient for us*: and therefore let us *walk with God*, as he walked with him; that  
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when that time cometh, of which *Enoch* prophesied, as *St. Jude* reporteth, v. 14. That the Lord shall come with ten thousands of his Saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have committed, and of all their hard Speeches which they have spoken against him; we may lift up our heads with joy, and find mercy in that day.

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## The Sixteenth Sermon.

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Job XI. 10.

*Shall we receive Good at the hand of God,  
and shall we not receive Evil.*

**T**HIS was part of Job's Answer to that saying of his Wife in the former verse, *Dost thou still retain thy integrity? Curse God and dye.* She pretended that his Piety and Virtue were now discerned to be unprofitable, and that it was all one whether he blessed or cursed God; for if he cursed him, he could but dye, and it was better to dye than to live in such misery. To which he Answered, *Thou speakest as one of the foolish Women*

*The Sixteenth Sermon.*

*men speaketh. What shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? The Idumean Women, it is likely, were wont to rail at their Gods, when any great adversity beset them; and Job told his Wife, that she spake like one of them, but not like one that knew and worshipped the true God: From whom it is reasonable that we should take all in good part, not only the good, but likewise the evil things of this life.*

There are two things intimated in the Text, besides what the words express, and they are these.

I. Our life here is a mixture of Good and Evil. No Man is wholly deprived of the comforts, nor any Man perfectly exempted from the troubles of it. There is indeed a great variety in the mixture; The afflictions of some being as inconsiderable as the Enjoyments of others. But in some proportion all receive Good and Evil; nor is any Man's condition at a perfect stay: We change often for the better or the worse. Sometimes from the bottom of adversity we rise to great Happiness; and at other

other times we fall as low ; which was the case of *Job* beyond ordinary examples. All which is true, as well of Families and Nations, as of particular Persons.

2. The Good we enjoy, and the Evil we suffer, are both from the hand of God. For his Providence always attends the working of second causes, either disposing them or permitting them to produce those things that happen in the World. When the Air is healthy or infectious ; when the Seasons are Fruitful or unkindly ; when the wind makes a Shipwrack, or when it brings the Ship safe into the Harbor ; when we suffer by Malice and Passions of others, or when they are taken in their own net and we escape ; we are in all these and the like events to look farther then the immediate causes of the Good or the Evil, and to acknowledge the over-ruling Providence of God. Thus although they were the *Sabeans* and the *Caldeans* that slew *Job's* Servants, and carried away his Cattel, though his Sheep were destroyed by Lightning, and his Children by a Tempest that blew down the house upon them ; yet he omitting, or not so much regarding

regarding the influence of these second causes, applied himself to the consideration of that Providence under which they all concurred to reduce him to this sad state; and *he fell down upon the ground and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my Mothers Womb, and naked shall I return thither; The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.* These are the two points intimated in the Text; That this present life is a state of Good and Evil, and that both are from the hand of God. But

3. The main scope of the words is, That we are to take all in good part from Divine Providence, and to receive *Evil* from God's hand as well as *Good*. Which is a Duty necessary to be understood, and necessary to be practised by every one of us, both for the discharge of a good conscience, and likewise for our own ease and comfort in this uncertain and miserable World. I shall therefore in the first place illustrate the sense of this passage, and shew what is meant by *receiving evil at the hand of God*; and then I shall propound to your consideration some of those many reasons why we should effectually persuade our selves so to do.

As to the first, The manner of bearing Evil from the hand of God, is that which is meant by receiving it at his hand. Particularly,

I. We are to receive Evil with the same honourable thoughts of God, where-with we are to receive Good from him. We must abate nothing of our esteem of his Righteousness, or of our belief of his Wisdom and Goodness. The sense of misery is indeed apt to breed hard thoughts of all those by whose means it comes, if they have knowingly contributed towards it, and designed what we suffer. But let us remember, Brethren, that this is a case always to be excepted. God knows and sees all the troubles that befall us, nay; and it is his Will that they should happen to us, and yet we must not think the worse of him for it. And though we take it ill of any Man that can easily help us when we are in distress, and yet refuses to do it; yet we ought not to be so affected towards God; and whilst we complain of that grief from which, 'tis true, he could deliver us in one moment; we must at no hand complain of him, nor entertain the least unworthy thought of him, for seeing



us in pain and suffering us to continue under it.

2. We are to receive Evil with the same constancy of serving and obeying him, as if we received nothing but good. We are not to grow weary of Religion, nor to give over praying, nor to depart from Justice or Charity, or any duty incumbent on us. The truth is, they must be great strangers to the spirit and design of Christianity who can be tempted to count their Prayers and their Repentance and Righteousness unprofitable, when they do not save them from the calamities of this World. Under the Law, indeed, the Promises whereof were Temporal, we may observe, the temptation prevailed upon some good Men. *Verily, said Asaph, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning, Psal 73. 13, 14.* But then he recovered a better mind, *ver. 21, 22. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my Reins; so foolish was I and Ignorant, I was as a beast before thee. It was this that Job's Wife bad him do, i. e. to throw off all pretence*

pretence to serve God, who had thus forsaken him ; said she, *Curse God and dye ;* scorn to serve him any longer, and make an end of thy life. But said he, *Thou speakest as one of the foolish Women speaketh ; what, shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil ?* Nay,

3. We are to receive evil from God with thankfulness for the good things we have enjoyed, for those which remain, and for those which we expect ; and above all, for the hope of Eternal Life. We must thank him for the care he takes of us, and therefore for all his dealings with us, for sending us that which he sees is most expedient for us ; yea, for those very Tryals and Chastisements which we complain of, though for the present they are grievous. And thus *Job* received Evil. *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; Blessed be the name of the Lord.*

These, I confess, seem to be hard lessons, but they are such as we must learn ; and how hard soever they may be, yet let us be assured, that they are not unreasonable ; and that is the second point

I was to shew ; and what I chiefly designed to insist upon at present. Therefore,

1. We should consider, that we have not deserved the Good that we receive from the hand of God ; but the Evil which we receive , that we have abundantly deserved. All, indeed, do not deserve Evil from God equally ; but all deserve it more or less. And as for meriting good from him, that no Man must pretend to , how Righteous and Godly soever he be. For if God should be severe to mark what is amiss , who could stand before him ? If he should enter into Judgment with his Servants, no flesh living would be justified. Now if *Job* who was a perfect and upright Man, a Man of extraordinary Piety and Virtue, received Evil from God as he ought, how much more should we do so, that fall short of his perfection ? When we suffer affliction , our hearts must justify God in all , because they condemn us in so many things. Our own Consciences are enough to stop our mouths, or rather to make us confess, that we have sinned but that God is righteous : Especially 'since all the good that we ever enjoyed,

enjoyed, and do now enjoy, is from a holy and just God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. For if we who are obnoxious to his Purity and Justice, have yet received innumerable benefits from him, it is hard and unreasonable to complain of him, though but in our thoughts, that he sometimes lets us feel a little of his anger, and puts us in mind of our sins, and of his own Justice; and that as he is a Gracious and a Bountiful, so he is withal a Holy God. Which consideration should prevail the more, because

2. God has absolute Authority over us, and so is every way just in correcting us for our offences; not only because we have done that which deserves Punishment, but because also he has a just and rightful Power to punish us for it. Though a Man knows that he has done ill, yet every body must not take upon him to give him correction. A Servant will submit to his Master, and a Child to his Father, and the Subject to the Magistrate, when they will not bear Punishment from every hand, as there is no reason that they should. How much more should

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we submit to the Chastisement of the Almighty, who is the Father of Spirits, and our Sovereign Lord, upon whom we absolutely depend, because he made us out of nothing, and sustains us every moment that we live? When we were born, we brought nothing with us into the World, but have lived ever since upon the good things, which God of his bounty hath lent us for our use. And if he for good reasons takes them away, he does us no wrong, for they are not ours, otherwise than by his continual Gift. Which consideration disposed *Job* to submit, when he was divested of all. *Naked came I out of my Mothers Womb, and naked shall I return thither.* To the Earth from whence I was taken. *The Lord gave, &c.* Let us remember that no Lord has that right over his Servant, nor Parent in his Child, which God has in us all; and that since there is no obligation like to that which we have to God that made us, nor any Authority that one can have over another, equal to that which he has over us; there is great reason why we should meekly submit to his Chastisements, and be content to receive not only that good which we have not deserved, but that

that evil also which we have deserved at his Hand. But this is not all: For,

3. To confess the Truth, when the Evils, of this Life happen, they are for the most part very necessary, and may be always very profitable to us.

They make us to reflect upon our Sins, and they dispose us to Repentance. For a great truth it is, and we may happily know it by experience, That 'tis our way to do many things in our Prosperity, which trouble us in our Adversity. When *Joseph's* Brethren were brought into Distress themselves, then they could say, *Verily, we are guilty concerning our Brother; — and therefore is this distress come upon us.* Our faults do not much trouble us, when we have nothing else to give us disturbance, and in this case affliction does well to bring us to a sense of them.

Again, We are not so apt to feel our need of dependance upon God, when all things that we can desire are round about us. We must confess to our shame, that Piety and Prosperity are seldom found together in a great degree both of

the one and the other. When we are full, we are apt to forget God; but in our affliction we seek him early. Not but that a Man may grow more impious under the chastisement of God, as *Ahab* did. But then this was left as a mark of infamy upon him, that in his distress he *waxed worse and worse. This is that King Ahab.*

We should consider also, that the troubles of this life teach us *patience*; a quality very necessary for us in this World. It is undoubtedly true, that continual ease and fulness, and enjoying all that we would have, incline us to be soft, and hard to be pleased. Every little thing almost is enough to put us into a passion; and if God should always let us alone, we should make great troubles to our selves, out of the smallest disappointments. And when afflictions happen to us in good earnest, our very impatience is an argument that we needed them to bring us to Wisdom and a good temper. God's trials make us able to bear what once we could not; they correct the Intemperance of our desires, and give us a firmness of Mind; they bring our contentment within a narrow compass, and

and make it more easy for us to be happy than it was before ; and therefore says *St. Paul, We glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh Patience,* Rom. 5. 3.

By the same reason they disengage our affections from worldly things, more than we are well able to do it without them. For 'tis indulgence that makes us fond of the Pleasures of this World; but when any one of them is taken away, we must learn to be content without it ; and by satisfying our selves when we have lost one, we learn to moderate our desires about the rest, which is a good that recompences all the grief we endure in the way to it.

Especially since it leads to another good thing, which is the moderating of our Love to this Life it self; which when we feel to be made up of Care and Trouble, as well as Mirth and Pleasure, we grow more reconciled to the thoughts of Death, which puts an end as well to the Troubles, as to the delights of this World.

All which things tend to the greatest good of all, even our eternal Salvation ; to which we should add that whatever



ver Duties are necessary to this great end, we shall perform them most carefully ; For when by experience we are convinced how foolish a thing it is, to think of finding a complete Happiness in this World, or indeed any thing that deserves the Name of Happiness we shall seek for a more solid and enduring substance. For we must needs be more solicitous to secure that Rest and Happiness, which God hath Promised in a better Life, when we are satisfied that no such thing is to be obtained here : We are not so deeply affected with the danger of Worldly enjoyments as with the uncertainty of them ; They are indeed apt to corrupt our minds, but we do not use to be jealous of them upon that account ; but when we lose them, we are easily sensible that they are not to be trusted, and that if we would be wise for our selves, we must take off our minds from these perishing things, and grow wise to Salvation.

To conclude this point, The evils of Life do not only offer good considerations to our minds, but they are proper means to put us into a considering Temper, and to make us capable of understanding

standing the full weight of them. They cure us of the Levity and Easiness of Mind, which grows out of Ease and Luxury, and indisposes us to dwell for any long time upon wise and profitable thoughts.

Finally, the Patience and the Godly manner of bearing Evils, and the good use we make of them, worketh the increase of our reward, especially if we *endure grief, suffering wrongfully*, and most of all if we *suffer for righteousness sake*. This is that which St. Peter makes no doubt to say is *thank-worthy*; and it turns so greatly to our account, that instead of mentioning it as a thing fit to discourage and deject his Disciples, our Saviour bid them to *rejoyce*, and to be *exceeding glad*, for, says he, *great is your reward in Heaven*.

4. As the Evils of this Life are for our good, so God means and designs them for our good too. There is not any one good use which may be made of them but God intends it, when he sends them; and 'tis our own fault if we do not grow the better for them. *David* found by experience, that it was good for him that  
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he *was afflicted*; and he confessed that God in *very faithfulness* had afflicted him, (*i. e.*) meaning all the advantage to him which he had gained. For that reason it is said, *God does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of Men*; not merely to make us feel Pain and Trouble, but because our good requires it. Physick is sometimes as necessary for us as Food; and though it be bitter, we do not think the worse of him that administers it, because 'tis administred for our Health, either for the cure or for the prevention of a Disease. And should we take it in ill part from God, when for the health and improvement of our Souls, he gives us wholesome, though sharp Medicines? He gives us Food, Raiment, Plenty, Peace, and Health, that we might in the midst of these good things serve him with thankfulness; and the greatest cause we have to rejoyce in them, is that they are of his sending, who intended them not for Snares, but for Blessings to us. When therefore he takes any of them away, he does it with the same good meaning either to correct what is bad, or to perfect that which is good in us; the best reason of our rejoicing continues still, which

which is, that God still exerciseth a Paternal care over us, as a Father corrects the Faults of his Child because he loves him, and would have him do better for the time to come. We are therefore to take all in good part, the evil as well as good, that comes from God's Hand, because 'tis all meant in good part to us. Especially if we consider,

5. That he is not, and cannot be mistaken in judging what kind of Evil, or what degree of Evil is expedient for our good. Let that which happens, be of what kind it will, and how great soever it be in the kind, yet from his infinite Wisdom we ought to conclude against all objections, That all things considered, it is the best for us. We perhaps do not see how it should be so, but we have not the less reason to believe it. God's thoughts are above ours, and his ways above our ways; and we are not to argue as if we understood our selves as well as God understands us. Our business is to submit to him patiently, and to depend upon him intirely, and to thank him from our hearts for his continual Providence over us; Acknowledging

ledging that we are not fit to be humour'd in all our desires, neither to enjoy Pleasure longer than he sees 'tis for our good, nor to say with what pain we should be chastised, or with what Trouble we should be exercised; we are not wise enough to be our own chusers; and we cannot be better than by being in God's Hands.

6. We should take Evil at God's hand in good part, because he is not wanting to supply us with strength to bear it, and to support us with comforts of a better kind than those he takes away. If he makes us more conformable to his will, we get a better Conscience than we had before, and that will of it self enable us to go through many and great Troubles of this Life. If he lessens our Love of this World, and increases our Faith and Hope of a better Life, and fixes our thoughts upon Heaven more than they were wont to be; if he inspires us with a greater sense of his Love, and gives us more and more of his Holy Spirit; then although here are worldly Evils to be born, yet there are also such Spiritual consolatives  
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to support us under them, that we have more reason to be thankful than to complain. *God will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the temptation, &c.* so the Apostle assured the Christians, and were themselves examples of it; none ever went through greater Troubles and Persecutions than they, but they do not speak of themselves as objects of Pity. He says they were strengthened with all might according to God's Glorious Power, unto all Patience and Long-suffering with joyfulness, *Col. i. 11.* They were indeed *troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, 1 Cor. iv. 8. vi. 10.*

7. We are to consider that the Troubles of this Life are not always Punishments, but sometimes Trials. In which case they admit of great comforts; and therefore St. James says, *My Brethren, count it joy, when ye fall into divers temptations, James i. 2.* where by temptations he understands those Troubles that from time to time beset the Christians, for  
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their profession, and proved their sincerity ; for so 'tis explained in the following words, *knowing this, that the tryal of your Faith worketh patience.* Such were the afflictions of *Job*, as we see by the circumstances of his story. God had given this testimony to him, That he was a *perfect and an upright man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil.* But Satan answered, *Doth Job fear God for nought ? Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side ? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.* Thus the Devil charged *Job*, and in him all Religious Men, That his pretence to Piety was mere flattery, not proceeding from a hearty love to God, but from the Love of Worldly Prosperity. Now though the event shewed the falseness of the Devils suggestion ; yet thus far he was in the right, That affliction tries whether a Man be a mere mercenary pretender to Religion, or whether he be an upright Man fearing God and eschewing evil. For he that pretends Religion, pretends to serve

serve God, and to depend upon him in all conditions of Life, and that God is more to him than all the World besides. But the reality of this can never be so well seen as when we do his will, and bleſs his name, even when he deprives us of the good things, and ſends us the afflictions of this Life. We ſhould therefore receive evil from God's hand as well as good, though we were as perfect as *Job* was, in fearing God and eſchewing evil; becauſe though it does not befall us in ſuch a caſe as a Punishment, yet it comes as a tryal and there are weighty reaſons for Patience under it; For (1.) it is exceedingly for the Honour of God and Religion, if we acquit our ſelves well in bearing it. This ſhews the ſincerity and the power of our Faith; and that Religion is a Principle of the trueſt Fortitude and Fidelity, when no worldly loſs, nor outward pain can hinder us from bleſſing God and perfevering in our Duty; the World will ſee that we are very ſure we ſerve a good Maſter, and one whom we believe nothing ought to deter or diſcourage us from obeying, not death it ſelf, nor vexations worſe than Death. Hereby we declare that with-

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out all this Worlds good, he alone is sufficient for our reward; that there is no evil like losing his favour, no good like keeping it. (2.) It will make also for our own Comfort; for although without this a good Man may have reasonable assurance of his own integrity, *i. e.* by an equal Care to do his Duty in all respects, while God makes an hedge about him on every side; yet it cannot be denied that he must needs have yet a more comfortable assurance of it, when he goes on to depend upon God under the hardest pressures of affliction. For this is the highest Point of Religion, and therefore proves our sincerity in all the rest. Upon this trial we cannot doubt but that it was for God's sake, that we abstain'd from Drunkenness and Theft, and hard dealing, and Lust and Uncleaness; that in pure Conscience and with Pious affections we offer'd up our daily Prayers, and Blessed God for all his gifts, and observed his Laws. For no other Principle can make a Man persevere in Religious dependance upon him, when he is not bribed with the Prosperity of this World. The Truth is, that all the Virtues that are exercised while

while every thing goes well with us as heart can wish, are something necessary for our welfare in this World, if we go wisely to work for it. A liar will not be believed, a false Man will not be trusted, drunkards will hardly thrive, a malicious and hard-hearted Man will be hated, and he that does not Worship God shall be reproached. The Vices and impieties of humane Life are enemies to our well-doing in this World; affecting either our Bodies or our Estates, or our Quiet, or our Reputation; so that the very Love of this World will teach a wise Man to Live well and religiously in appearance, that he may fare the better for it here. But when God sends those evils that our Piety is so far from hindring, that it does expose us to them, and yet we go on to Bless and Serve him, this puts it out of all question, that we are really and in earnest what we seem to be, the Faithful Servants of God, as God speaking after the manner of Men, said to *Abraham*, when he offer'd up his Son *Isaac*. *Now I know that thou fearest God, because thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son from me.*

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Thus

Thus I have laid down some Considerations very useful, I am persuaded to prepare us for all the Portion of Evil which God may think fit to send upon any of us in this World; that whenever any of it happens, we may follow the example of *Job*, and receive evil from God's hand, as well as good.

But then, Brethren, we must remember that such things as these are to be thought of very much before, or we shall be little the better for them, when once adversity happens. For 'tis not barely knowing nor hearing them, but 'tis much considering them, that must make them Principles within us, and fortifie us against all surprizes.

It is a great mistake that these thoughts must make us melancholly, and spoil that reasonable comfort we should take in the good things which God lends us for our use. For while we enjoy them without overvaluing them, we have all that they are good for; and they are not the less pleasant, because we know of greater Blessings than they are; our part is to use them thankfully, while they are ours, for our use; and by all Prudent means, as far as lawfully we can, to keep off Adversity

versity ; because then we may be sure  
that those evils which befall us with-  
out our own faults, are most properly of  
God's sending. And so we shall feel our  
selves under the Power of all those rea-  
sons why we should with submission and  
thankfulness *receive not only good, but evil  
also at the hand of God.*

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## The Seventeenth Sermon.

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ROM. VIII. Part of 33. and 34. v.

*It is God that justifieth : who is he that condemneth ?*

**T**H E S E words signify one of these things ; Either that when God justifies, no Man will condemn, but that when we are sure of pleasing him, we are sure of pleasing all too ; or else that if he approves and justifies, it is no great matter, nor should we be much concerned by whom we are accused or condemned.

But the first cannot be the meaning, that no Man condemns whom God justifies : For the Disciples of Christ were used in that manner, that St. Paul applied this saying to their case, v. 36. *For thy*

F f 4

*sake*

*sake are we killed all the day long, we are appointed as sheep for the slaughter.*

He means therefore, That if God justifies, it is not considerable who condemns. They were brought before the Tribunals of Men, where grievous things were laid to their charge; yet because God saw their Innocence, says the Apostle, *who shall lay any thing to the charge of Gods elect?* They were dealt with as Malefactors, yet says he, *Who is he that condemneth?* so that he supposes them to be condemned by no body, in comparison, because while they were condemned by Men, God justified them.

Which offers two points to be considered.

1. That Men do sometimes condemn those whom God justifies. (2.) That they whom God justifies have no cause to be dejected when they are condemned by Men.

1. That Men do sometimes condemn those whom God justifies; and they condemn them too for the sake of those things which he approves, and lay that to their charge which he is now pleased with,  
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and will hereafter reward. It was such a case which our Saviour prepared his Disciples for, when he said, *Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil falsely against you for my sake*: Which began to be fulfilled as soon as ever the World took notice of them. And here let us briefly consider what kind of Persons they then were, and how they were used.

The Apostles, and those that were in fellowship with them, professed the sincere and uncorrupted Truth of the Gospel, teaching all Purity and Virtue, and whatever they received in Command from our Lord Jesus. Nor will any Christian of what other Name soever, pretend that there was too much or too little, in their Doctrine. All are agreed, not only that Christianity is worthy of all acceptance; but also that it was by them professed intirely and without mixture. As to their manners, they were Persons of the greatest simplicity, easie to be known what they were, given to no deceit, desiring to Live in quiet, because there was nothing in their Doctrine, or in their way of Life, to create jealousies in others. It was a very great part of their Religion  
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to deny themselves, and to do good to their Neighbours. They did not aim at Worldly power and greatness, but instead of using that interest they had in the People to save themselves by Violence from Persecution; they urged subjection to Laws and Government upon Principles of Conscience. They were such kind of Men, and we doubt not but God justified them.

Let us therefore see how they were used by Men, by *Jews* and *Gentiles*. As for the *Jews*, it was not indeed very likely that they should be treated much better than their Master had been before. And so the event shewed; 'tis true they made many Converts, and a great part of the People cleaved to their Doctrine and Fellowship; but this enraged their enemies so much the more; and the more numerous that Christians grew, there were so many more to be hated and reviled, and persecuted: For

1. They were charged with Heresie, and represented as a Sect that subsisted upon the Profession of new and false Doctrines. For thus we find *St. Paul* obliged to apologize for himself before *Fælix*, against

against the accusations of the Jews ; *They cannot, says he, prove the things whereof they now accuse me. But this I confess unto thee, That after the way which they call heresie, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law, and in the prophets (Acts 24. 14.). And have hope towards God, which they themselves allow, That there shall be a resurrection of the dead. And herein do I exercise my self, to have a conscience void of offence towards GOD and Men.* St. Paul, and such as he, believed all things that were written in the Law and the Prophets, those very writings which the Jews themselves acknowledged to be Divine ; and tho to this Faith, they added the Doctrine and Practice of a good life, yet they were esteemed Hereticks, because they undertook to see with their own eyes, and to judge for themselves, instead of submitting to the Authority of the Council that had betrayed and murdered the Lord Jesus.

2. They were accused of Sedition too, as if they designed to make Stirs and Commotions, and to alienate the People from their Governours. Thus when Paul and Silas had converted a multitude  
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of Devout *Greeks*, and not a few of the Chief Women at *Thessalonica*, the *Jews* who believed not, moved with Envy, took unto 'em certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and drew some of the Brethren to the Rulers, crying, *These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also, who do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying, That there is another King, one Jesus*, Acts 17. 5, 6. And yet they never made one step by word or deed, towards deposing Princes, and changing Governments. Jesus, indeed, who had commanded them to pay Tribute unto *Cæsar*, had also forbidden them to be of the Religion which *Cæsar* was then of; and this was drawn into an accusation of Faction and Disloyalty. Thus also the same St. Paul being brought before *Fælix* at *Jerusalem*, the *Jews* complained by *Tertullian* their Orator, That they had found him a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the *Jews* throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the *Nazarenes*, Acts 24. 5.

3. They concluded them under a sentence of Damnation, as far as they could do it. Indeed they would have it thought so impossible for a Christian to be saved,  
that

that some of them after being converted to Christianity, were strongly persuaded, that they still ought to keep the Law of *Moses*, and would have mingled *Judaism* and *Christianity* together; as if there was no hope of Salvation out of the Synagogue: *Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved*, Acts 15. 1.

4. As 'tis usual in such cases, to damn first and then to kill, they delivered the Disciples of Christ to Death, and pretended the service of God for it. For which we may take those remarkable words of *St. Paul*, describing the temper of the *Jews* then, and what his own once was. Says he, *I was taught according to the perfect manner of the Law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye are at this day. And I persecuted them even unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women*, Acts 22. 3, 4. And in chap. 26. v. 10, 11. he declares, *That he persecuted them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, he persecuted them even into strange cities.*

Such

Such was the entertainment they had from the *Jews*, to whom the Word of Salvation was first delivered : But when it was carried amongst the *Gentiles*, they condemned it too. For,

1. It was run down, as if it had brought Irreligion and Atheism into the World ; insomuch that the Ancient Apologists were fain in good earnest to set themselves against this absurd accusation, and to shew that it was not all one to serve God at all, and not to serve many Gods ; That there might be devotion without bowing down to Images ; and Religion and Worship without Idolatry ; and better a great deal without these things than with them.

2. It was exclaimed against as a late upstart Religion, that began but yesterday, and was fitter to be hissed than argued out of the World. They used to ask the Christians what sort of Men they could name, either *Greeks* or *Barbarians*, that made their Profession, and had their Rites and Worship, before *Jesus* appeared. You have forsaken, say they, the Customs of the Fathers, that had been observed of Old time in all Cities and Countries ;

Countries; you have revolted from a Worship, which has had the Tradition of all Ages; and the approbation of Kings and People, Law-makers and Philosophers, and by almost all the World, till such as you appeared, who are but of yesterday.

3. They try to overwhelm it with the most gross and palpable untruths; they gave it out that the Christians were worshippers of the Sun; nay, that they adored an Asses-head, and sometimes a Cross: They did not stick to say, That in their solemn Assemblies they killed a Child, and committed Incest. They also upon no occasion in the World, disarm'd them as a seditious and disloyal People, and accused them of Treason, tho none ever set better examples of Fidelity to their Governours.

To conclude: Our Predecessors of the Primitive Church, were now and then condemned to several sorts of deaths; and it was often a great deal more safe to be some notorious Malefactor, than to be a Christian.

In a word: The Gospel met with that Opposition, which no Religion ever did before. The Gods of other Nations,  
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new Gods every day were admitted into a Temple at *Rome*, with some formality, and without trouble. But when the Disciples of Jesus came to call Men to the Worship of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he had sent; *Jews* and *Gentiles* conspired to extinguish their Religion, and to blot out their name for ever; insomuch that the *Jews* at *Rome* could tell St. Paul *As concerning this Sect, we know that it is every where spoken against.* Those therefore whom God justifies, have been, and may be condemned by Men: Which will not seem strange to any of us, if we consider what the causes of it are. For instance;

1. That hatred of truth which reigns in a great part of Mankind. They cannot bear sound Doctrine, nor can they therefore bear those that profess and practice it; truth is against them, and therefore they will be against the truth, and all that follow it. So long as Pride, Lust, Avarice, Revenge, Luxury, and such things remain, there will be so many causes of condemning that which God approves. To which we must add,

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2. The inflexibleness of true Doctrine, and of those that maintain it, to the designs of Worldly men. Christianity was said to be a perfect Scheme of Religion, that would suffer no additions or alterations. It was stiff, and would not bend to the pleasure of Priests or of States-men; as all that would, which the Heathens called Religion among themselves. Whilst it was kept in wise and honest hands, and truly represented, there was no room for Cheating, no Allowances for Pious Frauds, no place for convenient Inventions: Innovations could not be brought into the Faith of Christians, or the Substance of their Worship, but they would be corruptions of both; without tampering with it, it could not serve the ambition of a few, to the prejudice of all others. And therefore, while it was pure, they could not bear it, whose gain was their Godliness, and who had been used to tell lies in hypocrisie.

3. The proneness of mankind to Superstition, is another cause of disapproving what God approves. The true Disciples of Christs are, according to their Religion, for a plain Faith, a pure and simple Worship, and for a few Mysteries,

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no more than God has made ; and for making Charity and Purity the end of all these. But generally speaking, people are for being saved by a multitude of Ceremonies, with a Priest to administer them. They love to be amused, and to have their imaginations entertained with Mysteries that they do not understand, and then to believe that their Souls have received a great deal of good by it. On the other side, Christianity does very little gratify the Fancy, and labours very much to inform the Understanding ; and therefore has been thought a Religion fit only for Philosophers, being not accommodated enough to the vulgar, unless it were dressed out with more Mystery and Pageantry. But then the Ancient Fathers made no doubt to call it a Philosophy, and such a one as was designed to make Plowmen and vulgar Persons Philosophers, *i. e.* to cure them of Superstition, and to inform their minds with the knowledge of the most profitable Truths. This is the true business of Christian Priests, not to make gain to themselves by deceiving people that were to be deceived, nor to get power and dependencies by those Doctrines whereby the people get ease, and liberty

liberty, and ignorance ; but instead of nourishing and encouraging, to repress and correct the proneness of Mankind to Superstition.

4. These two opposite infirmities, a fondness of any thing that is new on the one hand, and a passionate zeal for that which has some Antiquity on the other, do by turns promote this mischief. Some Errors have very successfully taken place at first, when they were entertainments to those that loved Novelty ; and the same Errors in process of time, are hugged by others, because they have the appearance of great Antiquity. They are few in comparison, that had not rather be told, what is Late, and what is Ancient, than what is true. To which we may add,

5. The vast influence that prejudice and prepossession has upon Mens understandings ; which is very often so great, that it will not allow any thing to be said on the other side, and so Condemns him that offers Truth before he is heard ; or if a hearing cannot be avoided, it is able sometimes to divert the attention ; or if attention be given, it can corrupt the Judgment. Men in those circumstances

are but ill Judges, whatever their natural abilities are. They love one side of the Question, they hate the other; and they Judge accordingly.

6. In many Persons, the impatience of considering and weighing things, and the ease of letting others Judge for them, without examining particulars; is the cause of false Judgment. For the ease that a Man gets this way, inclines him to believe that there are Judges who cannot Err, and will be sure to tell him nothing but Truth; and this disposition is a mighty friend to those that pretend to so high an Authority, because it gives them an opportunity to say what they list, and to determine what they please. Whoever therefore comes with truth on the other hand, against an Authority that must not be thought capable of mistaking, 'tis like to be welcome neither to those that teach, nor to those that are taught; for in effect he comes to the former to tell them that they must quit their power, and to the latter that they must quit their ease.

These are some of the causes of Men's condemning those whom God justifies; by which it appears that it is an Evil which comes

comes of Evil. And the conclusion we are to make of them, it is this: That we do by no means square our professions and our actions, by so false a rule as that of pleasing Men, and gaining the favour and good words of Men; for they may and they often have, and I doubt not but they often will condemn those whom God justifies; and by the same reason they will Justifie those whom God Condemns. To get Favour, and to avoid Disgrace, is a happiness which he that scorns, is not wise; but 'tis no rule for a Man to live by; and he that makes it so cannot be honest. Man may condemn those whom God Justifies, That is the first Point. The second is this,

2. That to be condemned by Man, is tolerable, if God Justifies. A Truth so clear, That more words cannot make it clearer, but they may serve to fasten it more upon our Minds. Let us consider such things as these,

1. The Infinite disproportion between GOD and Man; *St. Paul's* meaning was, that GOD Justifies, and Man Condemns; and to shew that in comparison no body condemned in this case, he puts his mean-

ing into the form of a Question ; It is God that Justifies, *who is he that condemns ?* A wise Man will not be much troubled to be rail'd at by a Slave, if he be honoured by a King.

2. We can certainly tell how to please God, because we know what profession, and what practice he approves ; for he hath told us what they are, and we may believe him. We are secure also that what will please him to day, will do so to morrow ; and that what he accounts good service now, he will always reckon to be so. For God changes not, and can by no means contradict himself ; He conceals no part of our Duty from us, and therefore to gain his Favour, we need not go forward and backward, nor contradict our selves neither. If we study to approve our selves to God, as we have but one Lord to please, so he is ever constant to himself ; our way is one, and plain ; and our rule the same yesterday, to day and for ever.

3. God knows the very secrets of our hearts, and the springs of all our actions ; and therefore they whom God justifies, are truly worthy. He that can bear the all seeing Eye of God, is in reality all  
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that he appears to be; he is that Just, Faithful and Unbiaſſed Man, and he has that pure and clear mind, which if we could ſee with our bodily Eyes, we ſhould, as *Plato* fancied, be ready to fall down and Worſhip it. Man juſtifies only by the outward appearance, and ſometimes happens to be pleaſed with profeſſion and ſervice, where nothing is meant of that which is ſo well taken. A Knave and a Hypocrite may win thanks from Man; but where God Juſtifies, there is Faithfulneſs and Integrity; and whoever Condemns ſuch a one, diſgraces himſelf more than him.

4. If God juſtifies us, our own hearts do at the ſame time acquit and abſolve us; ſays *St. John*, *If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.* And 'tis true on the other ſide, that if God condemns us not, then have we confidence of our ſelves. By doing thoſe things that pleaſe him, we are ſure to pleaſe our ſelves: By making him our Friend, we ſhall infallibly make one Friend more, and that is our own Conſciences, which is infinitely more to us, than the opinion of the World. 'Tis a plain caſe, that we approve our ſelves to God by following Truth and Goodneſs;

and this we know will not put us upon struggling with our own Judgment, and straining points against our clear knowledg of what we ought to do. All the while we are gaining his Favour we are sure we do well; and when we have done it we shall thank our selves, instead of being plagued with a sad and black remembrance of the way we took to get it. *Acquaint now thy self with God, and be at peace with him, and so shall good come unto thy Soul.*

5. There lies no Flattery, nor false Accusation, nor outward accident against us, to put us out of God's Favour, or to make us lose that we have wrought, to turn his mind, or to blot our services out of his remembrance. No change of Fortune shall bring us into disgrace; which consideration St. Paul laid great strength upon in pursuance of the Text. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distresse, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? v. 35. I am persuaded, says he, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come; nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, v. 38.* Nay says the

the Apostle, *in all these things we are more than Conquerors*; that is, we get by being Condemned by others, because by that we are made more dear to God, who will consider not only, that we served him, but under what discouragements from the World, we did so. Lastly.

6. *Whom God justifies, them he also glorifies. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the Image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren, v. 29, 30. i.e.* Those whom he foreknew to be his most faithful Servants, he did before time decree, that by suffering for righteousness, they should follow so glorious a Pattern as their Elder Brother the Lord Jesus. Moreover, *whom he did predestinate, them he also called, (i. e.)* he brought them to the profession of the truth in a hazardous time, that they should shew their Integrity; *and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.* Which is so sure, that the Apostle mentions it as if it were done already. Then he proceeds in the following verses, *What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things? who shall*  
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*lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. The conclusion is this, That whoever Condemns, we are not to be discouraged, if God justifies.*

But it may be said, That all this is very true indeed, but it serves the turn of all Parties, even of those who are most severely Condemned by each other, while each of them pretends to have God and Truth on their side : And therefore that this Subject might have been more usefully pursued, by shewing particularly what that Faith and that Practice is, with which they must be qualified whom God justifies ; and how we are assured of it. Now I considered all this at first ; but then I knew that I was to speak to persons who are neither ignorant of the Doctrine of this Church, nor of the evidence whereby it appears to be the very Truth of Christianity ; by which, whoever Governs himself in Worshipping God, in behaving himself to others, and in all his ways, shall be assuredly Justified of God, though all the World should Condemn him for it. But I considered also, that of all things which  
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are apt to shake the constancy of modest Persons, nothing is more likely to do it, than the mighty confidence wherewith they of the *Roman Church* Condemn us, and Exclaim against us. For to those who are acquainted with the History of the World, and of the Church, it must needs be a surprize, that Men who are said to be Learned, and known to be Zealous, do pronounce against us with no less severity than if we were mere Infidels; One would think there must be some deep reason for it, when they make us nothing at all, and themselves all in all. For thus they will not allow that we are a Church, or that we have any certainty so much as of that True Doctrine we profess; for they know us better than we do our selves, and as for our Salvation they are as sure it belongs not to us, till we are converted to them, as if they kept the Keys of Heaven. Nor do they sink us more than they raise themselves, who are not only a Church, but the whole Church, and not only not deceived, but even Infallible. They talk as if there were no safety with us, and no danger with them; which may raise such doubts in weaker minds, that I thought it not unseasonable to bring to your remembrance how violently the Apostles and their  
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Christian Brethren were Condemned by Men, of whom yet these Men will grant that they were justified of God.

If it shall be said, This is a common-place Argument, of which all Men serve themselves. I Answer, That the Argument is so much the stronger. For if these Men themselves will tell you, that confidence is not to be trusted, you will, I hope, make this application, That neither is their confidence to be trusted; and therefore that you ought to consider what they are, before you believe them to be what they call themselves; and examin what they teach, before you think the worse of your selves, for what they call you: And this is all that we desire of you, That you would weigh the reasons of things, and not mind swelling words.

Brethren, it is by no means a new Artifice, to talk in a very high strain, when Argument runs very low: Thus *Jews* and *Gentiles* exclaimed against our Fathers the Apostles and the Primitive Believers, condemning them for going against Antiquity, Universality, Authority, Tradition, Philosophers, Law-makers, Kings and Nations. And yet when all was done, all this was but empty noise, and vain pretence, and the Cause of Christianity was the Cause of God. Foul Errors have been dressed  
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with glorious appearances of Truth, and Truth has been opposed with Confidence ; and God suffers it to be so, to try the Sincerity of Men, that while they who are willing to be deluded, fall by the Temptation, Men of Probity, and Lovers of Truth, should upon diligent examination hold it faster than otherwise they would have done. This is one of the great Advantages to which that opposition tends, which Truth has met with in the World. And therefore the more lofty those pretences are, by which the other Church would bring us to an intire submission to her Authority in every point of Religion, so much greater reason there is to examine every one of her particulars ; and if I find that she is mistaken in any of them, I am very sure that she is not infallible in all. And if she will not allow me to make a Judgment of the Particulars, 'tis just as if a man should try to hinder me from casting up my own Accounts, by going about to prove that he cannot possibly mistake in doing it ; he might indeed shew some Wit in working his Demonstration, but I should shew a great deal more folly in trusting him.

To conclude: We have a Rule whereby to try the Doctrine, I will not only say of

a Church, or a Pope, or a Council, but even of an Angel from Heaven, if an Angel should come and Preach to us ; and that Rule is the Holy Scripture ; especially the Writings of the Evangelists and Apostles. These are by all Christians acknowledged to be the undoubted, and the most ancient Records of our Holy Religion ; and they have had a Tradition so uncontrollable, as no Books in the World ever had the like. Whoever therefore is our Guide, it is very reasonable that this should be our Rule. And of all Churches in the World, I will never trust my self to her discretion, that will not trust me with the Knowledge and Study of this Rule.

Here we may, if we please, make our selves very sure, that we are of those whom God will justify ; for here we may discern what kind of Persons *St. Paul* and the Christians of whom he speaks in this place, and what all the Apostles and Primitive Disciples of our Lord were. For those Books which acquaint us with their Names, and which were written by some of themselves, do also discover to us what Faith they professed, what Doctrine they taught, and what Lives they led. Now if we profess that very Faith, and teach no other Doctrine, and frame our practice  
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by their Rules and good Examples, then without all question we are such kind of Christians as they were ; and then altho we should be used by the World, as they were too , yet the encouragement and comfort which they had, will also belong to us ; and we too may say, *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect ? it is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth ? it is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again.*

Having therefore the Infallible Rule of God's Word, whereby to guide our selves, *We beseech you, Brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how you ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more ; that while evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived, ye may continue in the things which ye have learned, knowing of whom ye have learned them , even from the Sayings of our Lord Jesus and his holy Apostles, delivered to us in the Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto Salvation, through Faith, which is in Christ Jesus.* Let us remember, that *it had been better for us not to have known the way of righteousness, than after we have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to us ;* not forgetting by any means, that  
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'tis a *way of righteousness* we have been made to know, and an holy Commandment that hath been delivered to us, from which therefore we may depart as damnable by an impure Conversation, as by letting go our pure Profession ; in which case we are so far from being justified, that we shall be the more condemned by our Faith : We have no false Principles to save our hearts from condemning us, if we allow our selves in any way of wickedness ; and *God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things* : Whoever else condemns us, that is more than recompence enough, if God justifieth. But who is he that shall justify us, if God condemns ?

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**F I N I S.**

THE  
SUMM  
OF A  
CONFERENCE

On *Feb. 21. 1686.*

BETWEEN

*Dr. Clagett, and Father Gooden,*

About the Point of

*TRANSUBSTANTIATION.*

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*The Second Edition.*

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The SUM of a  
**CONFERENCE**  
 On Feb. 21. 1686.  
 BETWEEN  
 Dr. *Clagett*, and Father *Gooden*,  
 About the POINT of  
**TRANSUBSTANTIATION.**

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*Introduction.*

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**I** *T will perhaps appear to some a little strange, that I do not say almost Incredible, that there should have pass'd a Conference above two years since, in which Mr. Gooden was concern'd, and the World yet to learn the Substance of it. The Vanity of that Gentleman to thrust himself upon all Occasions into Disputes with the most Learned*

## The Introduction.

*Men of our Church first, and then to boast of his own Performances in them, was so great, that there is scarce a Coffee-house in the Town that has not been filled with the Noise of his Impertinent Vapours. And if those of the Other Communion have been always remarkable for an Assurance becoming the pretended Infallibility of their Church; I may venture to say, that next to Father P—the Jesuit, and his friend Mr. M——, I scarce know any among them that have ever talk'd so loud, or made such Heroical Defiances of the Champions and Armies of our Israel, in all Places, and upon all Occasions, as Mr. Gooden these late Tears has done among us. But thus shallow Waters always run with the Greatest Noise and Violence; and little Sophisters, who either want Capacity to see into their own Fallacies, or think they have forehead enough to carry that off with Clamour and Confidence which they cannot do by Reason and Argument, delight to expose themselves and their Religion to the most dangerous Tryals; whilst Men of Learning and Judgment are modest and ingenuous, and know it to be neither for the Honour of their Church, nor their own Reputation, to challenge all Mankind to answer Paradoxes, and to shew that not to be Demonstration,*  
*which*

## The Introduction.

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*which when brought to the Tryal is hardly  
sence.*

See Mr.  
G's. Pap.

*I hope this will not be thought too severe  
a Reflection on the late Pretenders of this  
kind among us, which I speak out of a just  
respect to the more Learned and Charitable  
Persons of the Church of Rome; who  
have been no less Scandalized at these for-  
ward Zealots, than our selves; and to whom  
I ought to give this Testimony, That during  
a long acquaintance with many of them, I  
never met with any thing of the Vanity  
of those I have before mentioned. Our  
Differences in matters of Religion, made  
no Disturbance either in our Friendship or  
Conversation with One Another. If the  
discourse at any time led to a Controversie  
of Faith, we argu'd it upon the same Prin-  
ciples, and with the same Calmness, that  
we did any other Subject whatsoever; by  
Arguments drawn from the Authority of the  
Holy Scriptures, or from the Testimonies  
of the Ancient Fathers, as the Nature of  
the thing required us to do. If these did  
not Convince, they never flew off to the  
Common Place Topic's of the Authority  
and Infallibility of the Church; much less  
to that Exploded refuge of Oral Tradition;  
but the Controversie Ended. And when  
all was done, they were content to hope well*

*of those of our Church, who being sincere in their Enquiries, and willing to be led by Truth wherever it was, still continued to differ from them. Instead of calling Me a Heretick or Schismatick, or Thundring out Damnation against Me as such, a mutual Charity concluded the discourse. We hoped and prayed for the Conviction of the Erring Party, which ever it was ; but made no question, but that the same Heaven might receive us All, tho we should continue to disagree to the last.*

*But this was not the Temper of Mr. Gooden, and the rest of the little Herd of that Church, who gave so much Trouble and Disturbance to their own and the Nations repose ; and have contributed what in them lies by their Heat and Folly, to ruine both themselves and us.*

*As for the Occasion of the present Conference, it was this. A Gentlewoman of a Good Estate, and intimately acquainted with divers R. Cs. was by a frequent Conversation with them, wrought up by degrees into an Extraordinary Opinion of the advantages of a Recluse Life, for the better performing the Exercises of Religion; Ins much that the desire she began to have for such a sort of retirement, made her almost willing to leave our Church, and go  
over*

*over to the Roman Communion ; but that she still look'd upon their Doctrine, in those points wherein they differ from us, to be False, and Dangerous, and to one so perswaded as she was, Destructive of Salvation.*

*Being thus prepared for their Seduction ; they let slip no Opportunity to finish their work, and gain their Profelyte. For which purpose, care was taken, first by one of Her Acquaintance, to represent to Her all the Popular Pretences of that Church, by which many are Prejudiced in Favour of it ; and the Advantages it Had, in point of Antiquity, Unity, Universality, Infallibility, and what not, beyond Ours ; and then, in the next place, to get Father Gooden brought to Her, as one that would give Her a fuller satisfaction in all these matters, if she would but afford him the Opportunity of Discoursing with Her. And to the End his Arguments might make the deeper Impression upon Her, it was thought fit to set forth the Priest to Her ; not in the Glorious Idea of the Great Master of Demonstration, one who had devoured all Mr. I. Ss. Principles, and was thereby become such a Mighty Man of Controversy, that none of our Divines durst Cope with him ; He in whose hands the Dean of Pauls*

*himself was nothing, who had a certain Paper that in a few lines baffled all that could be said or written in favour of the Reformation, (which was a greater thing, answering in a few sheets all the Books and Sermons that had ever been publish'd or preach'd against them); But in the humble Character of a Countrey Priest, a little, inconsiderable man amongst them; and his Dress was accommodated to his Character, that so under this disguise he might talk with the greater Advantage to her.*

*But Mr. Gooden forgetting the person he had put on, presently fell into his usual strain. He began to talk of nothing but Infallibility, Antiquity, Demonstration: That all the Fathers and Councils were on their side: That he had baffled our most considerable Divines, and particularly the Dean of Pauls; who had in truth all of them so little to say for themselves when he came amongst them, that he desired nothing more to convince her of the Truth of their Doctrines, than that she would pitch upon some Point, and bring one of our Men to meet him, and she should see what work he would make with him.*

*Such a noise as this from one of the little, inconsiderable Priests of the Church of Rome, amazed the poor Lady: and had he prudently*

*Prudently contented himself with the Boast of the Victories he had already gain'd, without aspiring after the Honour of adding one more for the increasing his Triumph, he might possibly have saved himself from the shame of that discovery the following Conference made of his Abilities, and have gain'd his Profelyte. But as great Wits are too often a little inconsiderate; and, before they are aware, run themselves into difficulties, out of which they cannot tell afterwards how to extricate themselves; so it fell out with Mr. Gooden on this Occasion. For the Lady presently took hold on his Offer, and applied her self to Dr. Claggett; and the Time, and Place, and Subject being fix'd, Mr. Gooden and the Doctor met accordingly at Grays-Inn, Feb. 21. 1686.*

*I shall say nothing of the Menage of the Conference its self, but that it was with much Noise on Mr. Gooden's side; who in Discourse let fall some very extraordinary things, and which might have pass'd into the Abstract too, had not another Person who was with him, and seem'd much more modest and understanding than himself, observed what pass'd, and corrected his Blunders.*

*After the Dispute was ended, which lasted about Four or Five Hours, a new Discourse*

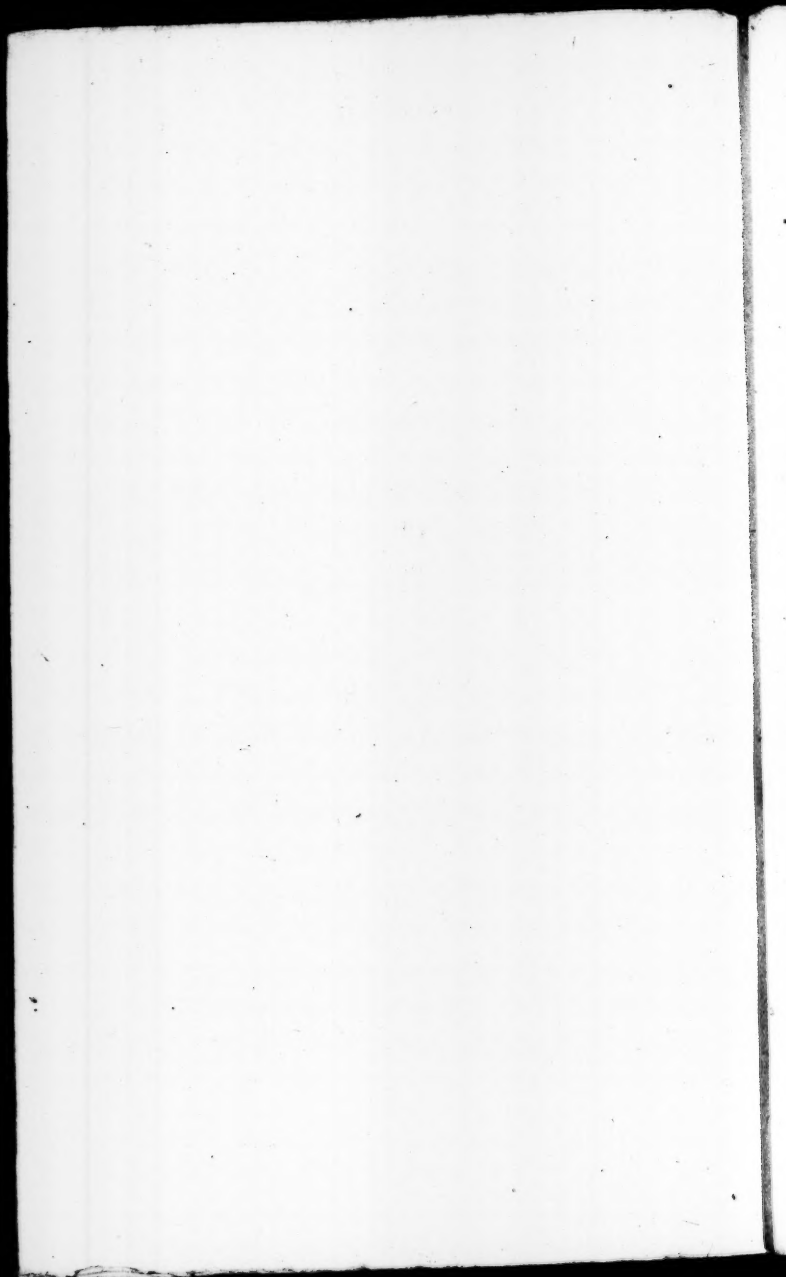


## The Introduction.

*Discourse arose about the Paper which Mr. Gooden made such Boasts of about the Town, and had so often represented to the Lady and others, as unanswerable. He was very unwilling a great while to let the Doctor have a Copy of it, tho he promised to give him an Answer to it ; till at last it was declared, That if he refused to let him have it, the Company would look upon it as an idle Paper, that had nothing in it, and that therefore he durst not trust him with it. Upon this he gave him a Copy of it, and the Doctor in pursuance of his Promise, the next day sent him the following Answer to it.*

*For what concerns the Sum of the Conference here Published, it was taken in Writing, and signed by both Parties upon the place ; so that there can be no cause for any one to question the sincerity of it : And tho the Abstract be very short, yet I am persuaded it is enough to satisfy every impartial Reader, why Mr. Gooden did not care to make any boasts of it. And those who were present at the Meeting, and heard all that pass'd between them, as well as the Lady for whose sake they met, were very well satisfied that he would not force them to publish the History of it.*

*But tho the Doctor was willing to let this matter die, and shew'd himself as careful of Mr. Gooden's Reputation after the Conference, as he was of the Ladies Conviction in it; yet being now by the Providence of God removed from us, I thought it a just debt to his Memory, to subjoin here a true Copy of these Papers, there being several of them abroad, both to prevent an imperfect Edition from some other hand; and lest Mr. Gooden and his Friends, who were so silent in his Life-time, should take occasion to raise any false Reports of this Encounter, if they thought they could not be disproved now he is dead. And if the great Esteem I had for that Excellent Person, and most useful Instrument of God's Service, in our late dangerous and critical Times, does not render me a very incompetent judg of whatever comes from his hand, the Reader will findeven in these short Notes, enough to reward his Pains, and to keep him from thinking the time lost that he shall please to spend in the perusal of them.*



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A  
 Private Conference  
 BETWEEN  
 Dr. Clagett, and Father Gooden,  
 ABOUT  
 Transubstantiation, &c.

**F**ather Gooden Proposed the *Rule of Faith*, to be the Subject of the Conference; but upon the Request of the Lady, for whose sake it was, the Question of *Transubstantiation* was taken.

And the Father desiring that the *Doctor* would be the *Opponent*, the *Question* was Stated on both Sides.

*Dr.* That the *Doctrine of Transubstantiation* is *false Doctrine*; and, That the *Natural Body of Christ* is not in the *Sacrament*, but in *Heaven*.

*Fa.* That

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*Fa.* That after the *Words of Consecration*, the *true Body and Blood of Christ* are in the *Holy Eucharist*, and that the manner is well exprest by *Transubstantiation*.

*Dr.* This is not all the *Doctrine of Transubstantiation* in the *Church of Rome*, the *Doctrine of the Church of Rome* is this, That the *Substance of the Bread* is chang'd into the *Substance of Christ's Body*: and the *Substance of the Wine* is chang'd into the *Substance of Christ's Blood*; which *Change* the *Church of Rome* does conveniently call *Transubstantiation*.

If the *Substance of Bread* remains in the *Eucharist*, then it is not chang'd into the *Substance of Christ's Body*;

But the *Substance of Bread* remains in the *Eucharist*:

Therefore the *Substance of Bread* is not changed into the *Substance of Christ's Body*.

*Fath.* I deny the *Minor (viz)* that the *substance of Bread* does remain.

*Dr.* If *Bread* remains, the *substance of bread* remains.

But *Bread* remains.

Therefore the *substance of bread* remains.

*Fa.* If

*Fath.* If the *Nature* of *Bread* remains, *Bread* remains ; but if only the *Name* of *Bread* and *Species* remain, then *Bread* does not remain.

*Dr.* That *Bread* which is properly *Natural Bread*, remains in the *Eucharist*, is proved from 1 Cor. 11. 26. *As often as ye eat this Bread and drink this Cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come.* 1 Cor. 10. 16. *The Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ?* Now from hence we argue thus: If that which is here said to be *Broken*, and to be the *Communion of the Body of Christ*, be properly *natural Bread*, then that which is properly *natural Bread*, remains in the *Eucharist*.

*Fath.* I grant the *Major*.

*Dr.* But that which is here said to be *broken*, and to be the *Communion of the Body of Christ*, is properly *natural Bread*,

*Ergo*: Properly *natural Bread* remains in the *Eucharist*.

*Fath.* I deny the *Minor*.

*Dr.* The *Bread* of which *Saint Paul* speaks, is *Bread* that may be *broken*, and therefore it is *truely* and *properly natural Bread*.

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*Fath.* I distinguish the *Antecedent*; as to the *Accidents* and *Appearance* of *Bread* it may be *broken*; as to the *Nature* of *Bread* it cannot, because it is not there.

*Dr.* This is to beg the *Question*; for the *Question* is, whether *Bread* be there or not? and the *Argument* to prove that it is there, is, Because Saint *Paul* speaks of *Bread* that might be, and was *broken*; but it is no sufficient *Answer* to this, to say that the *Accidents* of *Bread* may be *broken*, because the *Bread* is not there it self, which is the *thing* that was disproved.

*Fath.* The *Question* to be proved was, that the *Nature* of *Bread* was there; therefore it is not a begging of the *Question*, according to the *Distinction* given, to say that the *Nature* of *Bread* is not there, and consequently could not be *broken*: For the *Bread* there spoken of, is not meant of *Natural Bread*, but of *Bread* which came down from *Heaven*, and which is the *flesh* of *Christ*, John 6. 41. *I am the bread which came down from Heaven.* John 6. 48. *I am the bread of Life,* Ver. 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 58. From whence I infer my *Answer* to be good; that though the *H. Eucharist* be called *Bread*, and *broken* as to the *Species* of *Bread*; yet it is not *natural Bread*, but only in *appearance*, of which  
St. Paul

St. Paul spoke; for the same St. Paul, 1 Cor. 11. speaking of the same bread, saith, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh Damnation to himself, not discerning the body of our Lord.* Christ also speaking of the same bread, saith, *Take, eat, this is my Body,* Matt. 26. 26. Also Luk. 22. 19. speaking of the same Eucharist, *This is my Body which is given for you.*

Dr. The Answerer forgetting the Part of a Disputant, has pretended to prove largely by the *sixth Chap. of St. John*, and other places of *Scripture*, That St. Paul in the aforementioned places, did not speak of *Bread properly so called*, although he spoke of *Bread* that was to be broken. All which places, when it is my turn to Answer, I will consider particularly.

But if that which is here said is to go for an Answer, the force of it lies in this, That by the *Bread* which St. Paul spoke of, we are to understand the *Bread* which St. John spoke of, namely, the *bread which came down from Heaven*; by which the Answerer understands the *Natural and proper flesh of Christ*.

But that the *Bread* which St. Paul speaks of cannot be the *natural flesh of Christ*, I prove thus;

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The *Bread* which St. Paul speaks of, was broken.

But the *Natural Body of Christ* cannot be broken.

Ergo. The *Bread* which St. Paul speaks of cannot be the *Natural body of Christ*.

Fath. As to the *Species* and *Appearance of Bread*, it was broken, I grant it; as to any *Nature* contained under those *Species of Bread*, I deny it.

Dr. This *Distinction* does not avoid the *Argument*, because if the *Bread* in St. Paul and the *Bread* in St. John are really and properly the same, and the *Bread* in St. John be really and properly the *flesh of Christ*, then what is affirmed of the one, must be true of the other, and therefore if the *Bread* be broken in St. Paul, then the *Natural body of Christ* must be broken too; which cannot be.

I add further, That if by *breaking of Bread* St. Paul means *breaking the Accidents of Bread* only; and if the *Bread* that is broken be really that which is spoken of in St. John as aforesaid; it follows also that the *Accidents of Bread* are properly the *body of Christ*.

Fath. That which St. Paul calls *Bread*, had in it both the *Accidents of Bread* and the *substance of Christ's body*. As to the  
Acci-

*Accidents of Bread*, it might be *broken*; as to the *substance of Christ's body* which is mentioned in *St. John*, it is not *broken*, unless you mean as *Christ's Body* was broken upon the *Cross*.

"And if the bread which is broken be really that which is spoken of in *St. John* as aforesaid, both as to the *Accidents* and nature of *Bread*, I grant, that the *Accidents of Bread* would be the *Body of Christ*; and if it be not the same, both as to the *Nature and Accidents*, I deny it.

This I profess not to understand.

*Fath.* As to the *Doctor's Argument* it includes a *Sophism*, as will appear when brought into form, because it involves 4 *Terms*; because he supposes in one *Proposition* for the *Accidents of Bread* and in the other for the *Nature*.

*Dr.* In the *Argument* I used, I went upon this *Supposition*, That the *Accidents of Bread* were onely to be understood, as the *Answerer* supposes, and therefore I have not confounded the *Nature* and the *Accidents of Bread* together. Besides, the *Distinction* between the *Nature of Bread* and the *Accidents of Bread*, was not to be remembred any more by the *Answerer*, because I proceed upon his *Supposition*, That the *Accidents onely are broken*.

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Now if St. Paul speaks of nothing but what is *broken*, and *Accidents* onely are *broken*, and yet if he speaks of the *very flesh of Christ* too, then the *Accidents* of the *Bread* are the *very flesh of Christ*.

And whereas the *Answerer* by his last *Answer*, means the *Nature of Christ's Body*, as he says, I understood him of the *Nature of Bread*. And now once more I desire him to shew me where the four *Terms* are.

*Fath.* The *Text* of St. Paul, the Dr. takes for his Medium, and argues from a double *Supposition*, as first, taking it for the *Accidents of Bread* which were *broken*, and afterwards for the *substance of Christ's Body* under the *Accidents*, in which latter sense it signifies the same that is meant by our Saviour in St. *John*.

*Dr.* I observe the *Answerer* will allow nothing to be *broken* but *Accidents*; I observe also, that nothing is said to be the *Body of Christ*, or the *Communion of the Body of Christ*, but what is *broken*; If therefore nothing is *broken* but *Accidents*, then *Accidents* are either, according to the *Answerer's* long proof, the *very Body of Christ*; or according to the *Apostle*, the *Communion of the Body of Christ*.

But neither are the *Accidents of Bread*, the *Body of Christ*, nor the *Communion of the Body*

*Body of Christ.* And this, I say, is not answered, and believe will not be answered by any man that maintains, that *St. Paul* does not here speak *properly of Bread.*

*Fath.* All along in my Discourse I have supposed, that when *St. Paul* speaks of this *bread*, he spoke of the *H. Eucharist*, in which were contained both the *Accidents* of *Bread*, and the *true body of Christ.* How the *Dr.* has disproved this *Doctrine* so clearly as to justify the *Reformation*, I understand not ; Because, I conceive no private Persons, or particular Church, ought to pretend a *Reformation*, without clear evidence ; whether the *Dr.* has given such, I leave to the consideration of the *Readers.* And whether, having broken off from the great body of the *Universal Church*, and its testimony, he can possibly have any *certain Rule to arrive at Christian Faith* ? If *Scripture* be pretended, interpreted by a *fallible Authority*, how *Certainty* can be obtained, or why a *Soci-nian*, following *Scripture* for his *Rule of Faith*, is not to be believed as well as any other *Reformer* following the same *Rule*, I see not.

Signed

W. Clagett.

Peter Gooden.

Dr.

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Dr. *CLAGETT*'s Answer

T O A

P A P E R Delivered to Him by  
Father *GOODEN*.

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The Paper

**A** *Articles of Christian Faith are Truths ; Truths are Impossible to be False ; Therefore Articles of Christian Faith are Impossible to be False ; Therefore those who obtain Articles of the Christian Faith, must have some Rule to Acquire them by, which cannot deceive them : To a Parliamentary Protestant, the Ancient Fathers cannot be such a Rule, because they are accounted Fallible ; Nor Councils, because they also are accounted Fallible ; Nor Scriptures sensed by a Fallible Authority, because all such Interpretations may be False ; And therefore Faith cannot be Obtained by any such means. For that which is Doubtfull can only Create Opinion, which is also Doubtful ; And He that doubts in Faith, ( the Apostle says ) is Infidelis ; And a Company of Doubters are not a Church of Faithful, but a Society of such as the Apostle calls Infidels.*

*Signed Peter Gooden.*

THE

## The Answer.

Pap. *Articles of Christian Faith are Truths.*

Ans. The Design of the Disputer is to prove, that we are *Doubters* and therefore *Infidels*; But never did any man begin a business more unluckily, for at the very first dash he takes it for granted, that we do *undoubtedly believe Articles of Christian Faith to be Truths*; for otherwise he ought to have proved that they are so. But there is another Misfortune he is fallen into, no less than that; for his Argument to prove that we must needs be *Doubters*, is, that we want an *Infallible Rule*. Now if he is sure that we want an *Infallible Rule*, and that without such a *Rule* there can be no Faith, I am sure he does notoriously contradict himself, by supposing that we believe all *Articles of Christian Faith to be Truths*, though we have no such *Rule*. This is a very hopeful Paper, and like to make wise *Converts*, which ends in making us *Infidels*, and begins to prove it by an Argument, that manifestly supposes Us to be *Believers*; which also pretends that we have no *Infallible Rule*, and therefore can be sure of no *Point of Faith*; but yet manifestly supposes Us to be *Assured* of *Some* without it; which shews the Paper to be a trifling Paper, and worth no more Consideration. But because the Disputer is said to boast so much of the Argument Contained in it, I will go on with every Clause of it to Convince him, (if he does not already know it,) that there is not a Line in it, but is either false, or nothing to the purpose.

Pap. *Truths are Impossible to be False.*

Ans. By *Truths*, the Disputer means, the

*Truth of Things, or of Propositions, and therefore this is a vain and fulsome saying, which does not Advance his Reasoning one jot farther than it was before : For this is no more than to say, That which is true, is true, and it cannot possibly be, but truths must be truths. I think he applies himself to us, as if we wanted not only Christian Faith, but Common sense.*

*Pap. Therefore Articles of Christian Faith are Impossible to be False.*

*Ans. There is no doubt of this, supposing that they are Truths. So that the Argument he begins with being put into the right order, and into other words, is this ; It is Impossible but truths must be truths, but Articles of Christian Faith are Truths ; Therefore it is Impossible but they must be Truths. The Ancient Fathers had made wise work with Christianity, if they had gone this way to work to Convert Infidels.*

*Pap. Therefore those who obtain the Articles of the Christian Faith, must have some Rule to acquire them by, which cannot deceive them.*

*Ans. This is an obscure saying, and I must make the best of it. By obtaining Articles of the Christian Faith, I suppose he means believing them, and by a Rule by which to acquire them, He must understand a Rule, or means whereby to know what the Articles of the Christian Faith are ; and then his meaning is, That those who believe the Articles of the Christian Faith, must be provided of some such Rule or Means, to know what they are, as cannot deceive them. Now whether this be in it self true or false, it does not at all follow from what he had laid down before ; For though the Truth of Things or Propositions is*  
so

so sure, that ( as he wisely says ) 'tis Impossible they should be false, yet it does by no means follow, that the *Reasons* upon which I believe these things must necessarily be as sure as the Truth of the Things themselves. And this I make no doubt the Disputer was well aware of; But because I am sensible who they are whom he designs to pervert by this *Paper*, and for whose sake I Answer it, I will explain this matter by an Instance that will bring it down to all Capacities: If there was such a man as *Henry the 8th*, It is certainly *Impossible* that there should be no such man; but my *Belief* that there was such a *Man*, is grounded upon such *Reasons* as do not imply an absolute Impossibility of the Contrary, because it is grounded upon the *Testimony* of *Fallible men*: And yet I should be very little better then a mad-man if I should entertain the least doubt that there was such a man: which plainly shews, that I may have sufficient Reason to believe a thing without any Evidence of the Impossibility of the contrary; and this is enough to overthrow his *Consequence*. I shall now inquire what truth there is in the *Conclusion* it self; To which end I observe, That there are two things which may be understood by those words, *cannot deceive them*, either first, that the *Rule* it self is so plain and certain, that no man who uses it can be deceived by the *Rule*; or secondly, that 'tis Impossible any man should be mistaken in the *Use* of it. If he means the former, then I shall shew him presently, that we have such a *Rule* as he speaks of, and that he hath said nothing to make us ashamed of it. If he means the latter, then I say it is absolutely false, That those  
who



who without doubting believe the *Articles of the Christian Faith*, must have such a *Rule* to know what they are, as that they cannot possibly mistake in the *Use* of it. To make which plain to every bodies understanding, I shall add another Instance easy to be Applied; If a man skilful in *Aritbmetick* hath a great many *Numbers* before him, and desires to know what Sum they make when they are put together; he has the *Rule* of *Addition* to do it by, which *Rule* cannot deceive him. Now there are these two things to be observed farther, which I think the *Disputer* himself will not deny; first, that it is in the Nature of the thing Possible, that this man may be mistaken every time that he puts these several *Numbers* together, to bring them all into one *Sum*; but secondly, that notwithstanding this *Possibility* of being mistaken, yet after he has tryed it over and over again, he may be sure without the least doubt that he has done his work right. Even so we may have a *Rule* of *Faith* that cannot deceive us, and though it is not *Absolutely Impossible*, that we should be mistaken in the *use* of it; yet we may for all that be Assured, and believe without the least doubting, that we have learn'd what the true Faith is by that *Rule*; For all the World knows, that it is no sufficient Reason to *Doubt* of any thing, that the Contrary is barely Possible.

Pap. To a Parliamentary Protestant, the *Antient Fathers* can't be such a *Rule*, because they are Accounted fallible.

Ans. We never said they were such a *Rule*. This therefore is Impertinent.

Pap. Nor *Councils*, because they also are accounted fallible.

Ans.

*Ans.* This is Impertinent also: for we never said they were our *Rule of Faith*. But we have better Reasons to give, why *Fathers and Councils* cannot be our *Rule of Faith*, than this that the Disputer has made for us. And one is this, That we cannot make them the *Rule of our Faith*, but by so doing, we must depart from the *Primitive Fathers*, and the *ancient Councils*; in as much as all agree, That the *Holy Scriptures* are the *Rule of Faith*, and they made it theirs.

*Pap.* Nor *Scriptures* fenced by a fallible *Authority*, because all such *Interpretations* may be false.

*Ans.* This is the Place, where I shall tell the Disputer, what we believe, and why we believe it. And when I have done, I shall consider whether he hath said any thing in this clause, to shake our Assurance. We firmly believe all the *Articles of the Creed*, into the Profession whereof, we have been *Baptized*. We moreover believe all other *Doctrine*, that is *Revealed in Holy Scriptures*.

The *Grounds* of this our Faith, are these, That in the *Holy Scriptures* are Recorded, those Testimonies of *Divine Revelation*, by which the *Doctrines* therein contained, are confirmed. That these Testimonies were too notorious and Publick to be gainsaid; in so much that the *Doctrine*, built upon them, could not be overthrown by the Powers of the world engaged against it. That the holy Books were written by the *Inspired Preachers* of that *Doctrine*, which they contain; And that for this we have the *Testimony of Universal and uncontrollable Tradition*, which is a thing credible of it self. This is the Sum of that *External Evidence*, upon which our Faith is grounded. In assigning of which, I do by no means  
exclude

exclude that *Internal Evidence*, that arises from the Excellent Goodness of the Doctrines themselves, which shews them to be worthy of God.

Now whereas this Disputer says, That these *Scriptures* cannot be an *Infallible Rule* to us, because they are *sensed by a fallible Authority*, that is, because we, who are *fallible*, understand them as well as we can.

I answer, That no man needs to be *Infallible*, in order to the understanding of *plain Scripture*. I who do not pretend to *Infallibility*, am yet *certain*, which is enough for me, That I do find the *Articles of the Creed* in the *Scriptures*, and many other Doctrines besides, which I do understand. I am sure that I know what these words of

1 John 2.  
25.  
And Chap.  
5. 3.

St. John signifie, *This is the Promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. And, this is the love of God, that we keep his Commandments*; and the like. The *Antient Fathers* thought the *Scriptures* to be so plain, that they argued out of them, without pretending to an *Infallible Authority of Interpretation*, as I will shew this Disputer when he pleases. If nothing less than *Infallibility* will serve to understand, or as he says, *to sense words*, why does this Disputer put into my hands, this *Paper* of his; which is none of the plainest neither? I am sure he does not take me to be *Infallible*, and yet I am confident he would be angry, if I should say his *Paper* was not to be understood without an *Infallible Interpreter*; let him answer this if he can.

The Reason he gives, why *Scripture sensed by a fallible Authority*, cannot be the *Rule of Faith*, is, because, all such *Interpretations may be false*,  
That

That is to say, because, there is a bare *Possibility* of any *fallible* man's mistaking the sense of plain Texts. Which kind of Reasoning makes impossible, that every man should come to be a Believer, unless himself be first *Infallible*. And this I shall Demonstrate so plainly, that no man who has any share of Understanding and modesty shall be able to deny it.

There is no possible way, for any sort of *Christians*, to make known either the *Articles* or *Reasons of Faith*, to those that are yet Ignorant of them, but by words, or sentences, written or spoken. He who hears or reads the words and Sentences, cannot tell either what is to *believe*, or why he should *believe*, till he understands or ( in the Disputers Phrase ) till he *Senses those words and Sentences* ; but as yet his *Authority* is but fallible ; and words *sensed by a Fallible Authority* can never give a man *certainty*, either of the *Rule*, or of the *Reason of his Faith* ; \*If this Disputer be in the Right, therefore 'tis impossible to make him a Believer, unless you can make him *Infallible* first, that it may not be *Possible* for him, to be mistaken, in *Sensing* the words which he hears or reads. And thus farewell to all Advantage that any man can have by the *Infallibility* of *Popes* and *Councils*, or *Oral Tradition*, as well as by the *Scriptures* ; Nay, and to all Possible means of arriving to *certainty* in any matter of Faith, unless every body be *Infallible* first ; so that upon supposition that God would have all men to be saved, and therefore to believe ; it inavoidably follows from the wild Reasoning of this man, that God has made every Man *Infallible*. But if it be evident , that men are fallible Creatures, then  
this

this Disputer has Advanced a Principle the most destructive to all *certainty of Faith*, that ever was heard of in the world. But the comfort is, that 'tis so very absurd that no body, well in his wits, can be misled by it.

Pap. *And therefore Faith cannot be obtain'd by any such means.*

Ans. Which is as much as to say, that Faith cannot be obtain'd, till a man have the gift of *Infallibility*; And if every man has it before he can be taught to any purpose, what need can there be of an *Infallible Interpreter* to teach him? But, as I observed before; 'tis impossible to make *Believers* of those that are not *Infallible*, unless the Disputer, or his *Church*, has a way to make known the Doctrines and Reasons of Christian Faith, without words.

Pap. *For that which is doubtful can only create opinion, which is also doubtful.*

Ans. Therefore since all words are doubtful to him that has but a *fallible Authority* to *sense* them, as no man has more, before he believes; 'tis impossible for the Disputers Church to create any thing more than opinion, (*which is also doubtful*) in those whom she teaches, unless as I have already said, she can make them *Infallible* first, and teach them afterwards. And even then there would be no need of teaching them at all, because they are now *Infallible* themselves. Of all the *Papers* that ever I read, I never met with any thing more absurd, and contradictory than the Reasoning of this; In which the Disputer, out of a vehement desire to overthrow our Faith, and the Grounds of it, has laid down *Principles* that do effectually overthrow all ways of making  
men

measure of any thing ; and in particular, the use of those very methods by which his own Church pretends to lead men to Faith.

Pap. *And he that doubts in Faith (the Apostle saith) is Infidelis, and a company of Doubters are not a Church of Faithful, but a Society of such as the Apostle calls Infidels.*

Ans. What *Apostle* says this? if the *Disputer* refers to *Rom. 14. 23.* as I think he does, he has shewn his skill in the *Interpretation of Scripture*, to be equal to his mastery in *Reasoning*. If in the *Infallible Church* they can *Interpret Scripture* no better than thus, give me the honesty and industry of a *Fallible Church*, before it.

### *The Conclusion.*

**A**N D now after all, this Paper is as absurd in the design, as it is in the management ; for the business of it is to prove, That *Protestants* have no Faith, but are *Infidels* ; and that by this Argument they are and must be *doubters* : Now whether I *doubt*, or *do not doubt*, is a *Question* concerning a *matter of Fact* that I have more reason to know the truth of, than the *Disputer* can possibly have ; and if I know that I *do not doubt*, and he can yet prove that I *do doubt*, he is an extraordinary man indeed. For then I am sure he can prove, That *Truth* not only may be, but is false, which perhaps such a man as he can Reconcile with what he said at first, *That truths are impossible to be false.*

And this alone had been a sufficient *Answer* to his Paper ; for nothing can be more frivolous, than

than to go about to prove to a man by fine Reasoning, that he does *doubt* of a thing, when he is as sure, that he does *not doubt* of it, as he can be of any thing in the World. But the design of this *Paper* seems to be as *Impious*, as 'tis *Absurd*. And that is, to bring weak Persons to *Infidelity* first, that they may afterwards be settled upon *Romish Grounds*. I do acknowledg 'tis a very proper way, to bring us over to the *Church of Rome*, to make us *Infidels* first; But this they will not find so easy a matter; for we trust, that we are not of those *who draw back to Perdition*, but of *those that believe to the saving the Soul*.

I have omitted nothing in the whole *Paper*, but to take notice of that little and mean Reflection, in calling the *Protestant*, a *Parliamentary Protestant*. I have told this *Disputer*, the *Reason and Ground* of our *Faith*: If we moreover are Protected in the *Profession* of it, by the *Laws* of the *Land*, I suppose 'tis no more than what he would desire, for the *Profession* of *Poper*y; and he would think never the worse of himself, for being a *Parliamentary Papist*.

Thus I have Answered this *Paper* through every clause of it. And I am confident destroy'd all that little Appearance of Reasoning that it made. Let the *Disputer* build it up again if he can, I promise him, by God's Grace, that I'll pull it down again.

F I N I S.

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